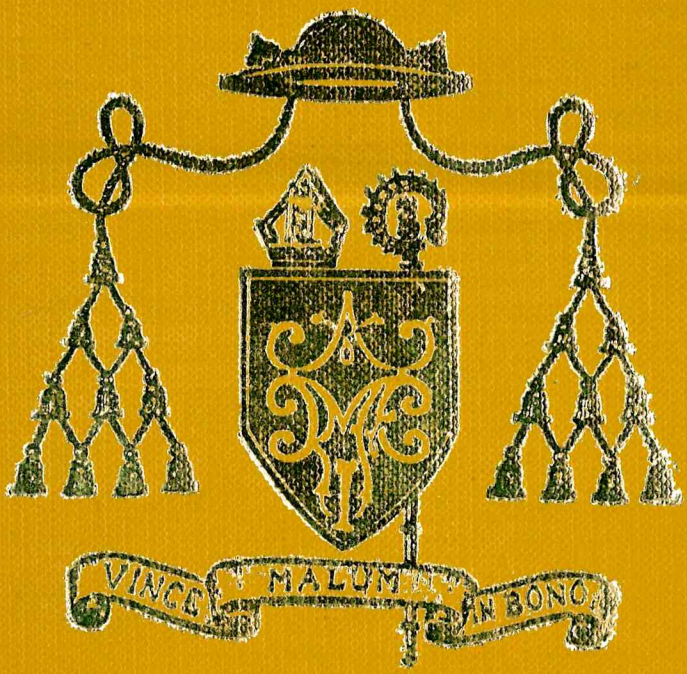

Archbishop George Matulaitis

Archbishop George Matulaitis 1871—1927

ARCHBISHOP GEORGE MATULAITIS

by Dr. Anthony Kucas

TRANSLATED FROM THE LITHUANIAN AND ADAPTED BY

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To
the honor of

MARY IMMACULATE

Mother of Christ and
Mother of the Church

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Preface

"I propose as my motto:
to seek God in all things;
to do all for the greater glory of God;
to instill all with the Spirit of God;
and to accept all in that Spirit."
(Spiritual Diary, October 14, 1910)

The words of Archbishop Matulaitis never parted with truth, nor his labors with God's will. He sought to embrace all that would help the salvation of souls. His heart quickened in desire to share in all of human pain and suffering. He sought no reward for self. His interests and activities were varied and broadcast among different countries and nationalities.

He was a religious to the depths of his soul; the Renovator of the Marian Fathers Congregation; the Founder of religious congregations for women. People often think that a religious, a monk, encloses himself with others in a monastery just for personal salvation. For Archbishop Matulaitis monasteries were necessary as communities of freely dedicated persons whose aim primarily is to extend God's Kingdom on earth.

In seeking to establish this Kingdom, the Archbishop encountered political forces that shortsightedly opposed the Church which sought only the deeper spirit of man. From this arose political entanglements which he stringently avoided.

The Archbishop's activities were not restricted to just one nation, and he soon became an international figure in the sphere of religion and education. He performed the greater part of his priestly work in the central city of Poland, Warsaw. There he was esteemed by the populace. In establishing the separate Lithuanian Ecclesiastical

Province (1926), he thereby served also his own nation's Church.

Having inscribed "For Christ and the Church" as the motto of the renewed Congregation of the Marian Fathers, he strove always and everywhere to serve the Church Universal. Fondly he called the Church his beloved Mother for whom he was always ready to suffer and, if need be, to die. It was that unconditional love of the Church which influenced him to accept the Bishopric of Vilnius out of obedience.

In his inaugural address as Bishop he said: "I stand (before you), unknown, and I ask of you only one thing: consider me Christ's servant, sent to you to show the way to heaven, to lead you to eternal happiness." Because he expressed his intention to serve equally the Catholics of all nationalities, not only the Poles but also the Lithuanians and White Russians, he displeased both local and national Polish political establishments; the former did not recognize other nationalities while the latter sought to fuse them with the Polish nation and State.

Despite the displeasure of the heads of state and its religious authorities, the Polish-speaking rank and file Catholics loved and respected their bishop. In the matter of patriotism he would insist that true love of country can and must exist without denigrating other nations.

On accepting the Bishopric in Vilnius, the Bishop prophetically declared that in that post even an angel could not please everyone. Throughout the seven years of his episcopacy he was heroically patient and temperate in the face of many kinds of slander and contrived complaints to the Holy See. He never responded to false and malicious attacks in the press if they were aimed only at his person, and not the Church.

The author of this book had the opportunity to meet the Bishop in Kaunas in 1926. Much later, in 1945, when he was released from the German concentration camp of Stutthoff, he lived for a time with the Marian Fathers in Warsaw where he met with Polish intellectuals and heard

many kindly remembrances about Bishop Matulaitis and his dedicated work for the Church in Poland. At the request of the Marians, he translated into Polish the greater part of the book, "Archbishop George Matulevicius," published in 1933. On completing this translation, the author was able to leave Warsaw for Paris, and from there to come to the United States in 1946 at the invitation of Marianapolis College in Connecticut.

When the process for beatification was well advanced, the Postulator, Rev. J. Vaisnora, MIC, proposed to the author that he write the definitive biography of the Archbishop. There was some hesitancy, in view of the demands a professorship at the University of Scranton and other urgent duties made upon his time. The offer was finally accepted with the understanding that Father Vaisnora would collaborate in unravelling the intricacies of philosophical, theological and ecclesiastical terminology, and would provide needed materials and sources from the archives of the Marian Fathers in Rome.

It was understood that everything had to be well documented, and Rome provided a great amount of published and unpublished materials or their copies. Completed segments of the biography were sent to the Postulator periodically for his approval and corrections. This work is the result of mutual cooperation and it is faithfully based on the Archbishop's manuscripts, many letters in Polish and Lithuanian, along with correspondence with Apostolic Nuncios and the Holy See.

This biography does not purpose the depiction of the Archbishop as a saint. Its intention is to show the living person in existential reality; in those circumstances, difficulties and sufferings as he lived and worked among various peoples. From this are to be gleaned his spiritual virtues: wisdom, patience, humility, but especially the all-encompassing love of God and neighbor which is the foundation of sanctity.

Anthony Kucas, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus University of Scranton

Foreword

If it is true, as Thomas Carlyle wrote, that "biography is the only true history," then the person and the work of Archbishop George Matulaitis must become known to the world on this eve of the 600th anniversary of the Christianizing of the Lithuanian nation. The history of the nation, one of the oldest in Europe, is at times resplendent and continental, but in recent centuries it has been mournful and fraught with internal and international travails. The biographies of the heroes and prominent people of this land will give the true perspective befitting history.

Despite foreign occupation and oppression, despite intense religious persecution during the 19th century and all but 22 years of this century, Lithuania has remained one of the most Catholic of European countries. Its thirst and struggles for freedom and independence are reflected in the life and apostolic labors of Archbishop Matulaitis during the comparatively short 56 years of this life.

The Servant of God George Matulaitis, MIC, started his life and came to maturity at the close of the 19th century, but his significant and wide-ranging activities were manifest for only one quarter of this century. The period was short but most productive.

Until recently, not sufficient attention was paid him since a definitive and comprehensive biography was not forthcoming to record the accomplishments of this personage surrounded by the aura of saintliness.

The first attempt at a fuller biography was made by Rev. Stasys Yla in his book "George Matulaitis," published in 1977, which the author modestly termed a "sketch."

After two years the historian, Prof. Anthony Kucas, produced a definitely more scholarly and fuller biography "Archbishop George Matulaitis-Matulevicius."

What emerges from a recounting of this life is an undeniably prominent historical figure worthy of world attention as one of the earliest effective apostles of Catholic Action, a martyr for social justice in a world of excessive nationalism, an activist with a deep reservoir of monastic virtues to give him balance and direction, a hero of Christian faith and compassion. In his work with his own and other religious orders, it is amazing how the constitutions and revisions authored and promulgated by him on the life of vowed religious antedated by some 50 years the reforms and directives of Vatican Council II.

The crucible of time has refined the personage of this extraordinary man to the point that his heroic virtues are being universally recognized and the Servant of God George Matulaitis has become the first Lithuanian candidate for beatification.

Lest the charge of chauvinism against the Poles be alleged, it must be posited that the original sources of the facts are supplied by the Poles themselves. This information is not available elsewhere.

There is a lack of fuller information on the virtues of the Archbishop as adjudicated in the diocesan and Apostolic processes, possibly because there is not yet a translation from the Latin and Italian.

As long as we do not have a biography based exclusively on primary sources (personal letters and journals), the historical work of Kucas can still be esteemed as a most worthy contribution to know and appreciate this beacon of the Lithuanian Church and nation.

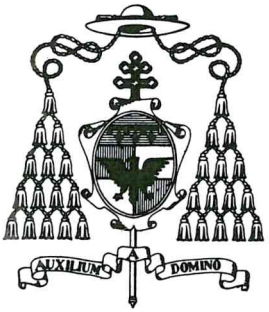
The present book is an adaptation of the fuller and presently most definitive biography of Archbishop Matulaitis written in Lithuanian by Dr. Anthony Kucas.

The prevalence of Lithuanian history in the original work is the genre of the author who is essentially a historian and not so much a biographer, much less a hagiographer. This admission is made by Dr. Kucas himself. The English translation and adaptation is intended to make the original more acceptable to the general public. History is the background without which true biography is impossible.

It is my happy task to thank all of those who have in any way contributed toward the publication of this work. Special acknowledgment is due to the Very Reverend Joseph Dambrauskas, M.I.C., Provincial Superior of the Marian Fathers, for his encouragement and generous approval of this undertaking which has resulted in a more intimate knowledge of and admiration for a true hero of Christ's Church and the Lithuanian nation. The translator-author is deeply indebted to the Reverend Andrew Naudziunas, M.I.C., for his invaluable help in editing, proofreading, and adapting the original work by Dr. A. Kucas, to the Reverend Francis Garsva M.I.C., and the Reverend John Duoba M.I.C., of the editorial staff of the publisher. Their many suggestions for improvement and simplification of the manuscript have been gratefully incorporated into the text. We are indebted to Mrs. Sylvia Satraitis for the careful and expert typing of the manuscript. Her interest and counsel were invaluable.

Stanley C. Gaucias
Chicago, Illinois
1981

Introduction



Is he a saint? In the canonical sense of that word, the Church may one day so declare. However, by common acceptance, for the heroic and ennobling example of his life, even now we dare to call him a saint. A saint of our age — Archbishop George Matulaitis-Matulevicius.

God is great and infinitely far-sighted. Divine providence is evidenced in the choice of great, holy souls for various times and various places to strengthen their contemporaries, inspire future generations, be the glory of the Church, and a model to all.

What a noble model God has provided! The Lithuanian nation accepts him in grateful honor. She looks upon Archbishop Matulaitis even as a sailor looks to the North Star. He is an illustrious son of this nation and of the Church. His origins are found in the small village of Lugine-Orinai, near Mariampole. Born April 13, 1871, and until his saintly death in Kaunas on January 27, 1927, he offered the totality of his life to God and to the spiritual enhancement of others. His biography, authored by Dr. Antanas Kucas, makes this eminently clear. To him readers will be deeply grateful.

Because of poverty and poor health, the Archbishop's childhood and youth were fraught with many hardships, and he considered his vocation to religious life as a gift from God which he developed and nurtured by serious study. After ordination to the priesthood, he pursued his pastoral duties in parishes of the working people and for a time taught sociology and dogmatic theology in the Ecclesiastical Institute at St. Petersburg.

In 1909, he entered a significantly different phase of his priestly life. By special dispensation, he pronounced religious vows as a member of the Marian Fathers Congregation, without going through the novitiate. In time and through his efforts the Congregation was renewed. For this, the Congregation which existed secretly because of Czarist Russian oppression until 1918, considers him the second Founder. His leadership, noted for charity, wisdom, and prudence, ended only with his death. In obedience to the Pope, he accepted the Bishopric of Vilnius in 1918, and in 1925, he was appointed Apostolic Visitator to Lithuania.

In the final decade of his life and amidst arduous duties, the heroic quality of his virtues was specially evident. Known as the father and protector of the poor, always humble and just, he was able to accomplish much for his fellow countrymen. Always the good shepherd of his diocese where life was hard, unbending to self, he was sympathetic and generous to everyone in need of his ministration.

It was in the spirit of obedience and self-sacrifice that he accepted the Bishopric of Vilnius, and it was in that same spirit that he recommended to the Holy See that he be removed when political circumstances indicated such a move.

As Apostolic Visitator he was able to effect lasting results in the establishment of a separate Lithuanian Ecclesiastical Province through a Concordat with the Holy See.

Renovator of the Marian Congregation, Bishop of Vilnius, Apostolic Visitator to Lithuania — these are titles

which introduce George Matulaitis to Church history, titles for which he should be acknowledged and acclaimed by others besides his countrymen. The heroic fulfillment of his responsibilities is the proof of his saintliness.

The Bishop's devotion to the Holy See was prominent even before he developed a lasting friendship with Achille Ratti, then Apostolic Nuncio to Poland and later Pope Pius XI. This Pope cherished him for the eminent person he was.

I did not know Bishop Matulaitis personally, since I arrived in Lithuania in October of 1932, about five years after his death. I found copious and vivid reports even then of this Servant of God, his reputation, his labors in restoring vigorous Christian life for which Lithuania was noted, especially in the distressful fourth decade of this century.

His beatification is now in process. My heartfelt desire is that his acclamation be a shining light to the whole Church — the Church he loved so ardently; that his saintliness be a guiding star in the firmament of the Church in Lithuania. May his elevation to the glory of the altar be a sign of better times and a portent of that religious freedom which he sought for all and for which he labored and sacrificed so much. May the Lord in His mercy hasten that day.

Antonio Cardinal Samore
Librarian/Archivist of
the Holy Roman Church

Rome
April 10, 1978

Chapter 1

Early Years

On the Baltic Sea there is a land whose western shores are spangled with white sand beaches. The adjacent rolling hills are blanketed with pines whose graceful branches sway in the ocean breezes. Wind-swept waves wash up bits of amber which the ancient Romans called "Northern Gold." That land is Lithuania.

The many rivers of the country flow into the Nemunas and empty into the Baltic Sea. Among these rivers is the gently meandering Sesupe, largest of the rivers on the plains of Suduva. Many villages and towns dot its banks, the most notable of which is Mariampole, named after the monastery of the Marian Fathers, founded there in the mid-eighteenth century. In time, Mariampole became the center of that region. The industrious and substantial farmers of the area added much to the growth of the city.

Five kilometers to the north of Mariampole, on the left bank of the Sesupe, nests the tiny village of Lugine-Orinai. Among the eight settlements of the locality the Matulaitis farmstead was farthest to the north, between forest and river. The farmhouses were spacious and well-planned. From a distance they appeared like small estates. The road from Mariampole to Sunskai edged the forest side of the Matulaitis farm of about 80 acres of well-irrigated, fertile land.

The future Archbishop's parents, John and Ursula (Matulis), were married on February 13, 1844, in the presence of the Marian parish assistant, Father Jokubas

Maliauskas. Both were exemplary Catholics, devout, generous, and good neighbors. Five sons and three daughters were raised in that family.

Felix, the eldest son, after some schooling, worked in the regional office of the government, and died a young man. Magdalen married a Mr. Macys from a neighboring village. Third in line was John who eventually inherited the farm. Vladas (1852-1935), established a family in Bliudziskiai, several kilometers west of Mariampole. Marian became Mrs. Radzevicius and lived in Kalvarija. Emily married a border-patrolman and lived near the German border. Andrew (1856-1932), graduated from the Mariampole high school and the University of Moscow and worked for a time in a Moscow bank. Returning to Lithuania after World War I, he became manager of the district bank.

The youngest was George, born April 13, 1871. The parish records (written in Lithuanian), show that he was baptized George-Boleslaus on April 20 by Father George Cesna, Superior General of the Marian Order at the time.

As happens frequently with the youngest child in a family, George received special attention from his parents, but his childhood, as happy as it was, was marred by the early death of his parents. He was not quite four when his father died on November 13, 1874.

The widowed mother tried hard to maintain the farm and home, but was hampered by ill-health which caused her to be bed-ridden frequently. The rearing of the youngest son was left in large part to Emily, barely twelve years old at the time. He was just ten when his mother died at the age of 58, May 15, 1881.

When George was eight years old his mother sent him to primary school in Mariampole. He was an apt student and was eager to learn more of his God about whom he heard so much from his mother and the White Marians in the parish church.

His teacher was Thomas Zickauskas (1844-1923), a poet, who didn't intend to russify his pupils, but who held strictly to the program established by the Ministry of

Education and taught everything in Russian. There was one class weekly in the study of the Lithuanian language and one religion class taught by Father Vincent Senkus. The young boy was confused because all the students conversed in Lithuanian but were taught in Russian. His mother had to explain to him that Lithuania was under Russian domination, and that since 1864 almost all the Catholic monasteries were closed and that the Lithuanian printed word was forbidden; that all the Lithuanian and Polish White Marians were confined to Mariampole, there to die out by attrition.

To get to school involved walking five kilometers each way and only occasionally, in foul weather, getting a ride. This lasted three years and the unavoidable absences did not make for good schooling.

Vincent Slekys, a close boyhood friend and classmate in primary and secondary school, recounts in his memoirs the physical hardships endured by the youngster, especially during the long, cold winters. This led to a rheumatic condition which eventually developed into a disease later diagnosed as tuberculosis of the bones. This malady was life-long for the future Archbishop.

About a year after his mother's death, George's brother, Andrew, came home from the university for the summer. Through observation and conversations he noted his youngest brother's talents and deep desire for further study. Andrew tutored his brother in preparation for high school in Mariampole. Later, the elder brother wrote:

> It was a pleasure to work with him and be in his company. George would question me constantly about the phenomena of nature, about lightning and thunder, about plants and other living things. There was no end to his questions.

George successfully passed the entrance examinations, and Andrew agreed to help subsidize his future schooling. The young student was happy to be in secondary school, but the hardships did not abate. Traveling to school was still a serious problem, aggravated by the fact that tardiness

and absenteeism were not easily excused, no matter the circumstances. Money for books and other expenses was in short supply, and George would borrow books from his classmates. One of his classmates in that first year was Justin Staugaitis, later the bishop of Telsiai, who wrote of him:

> George was a pleasant, but not outstanding boy. His classroom work was adequate and he was frequently absent from classes because of poor health.

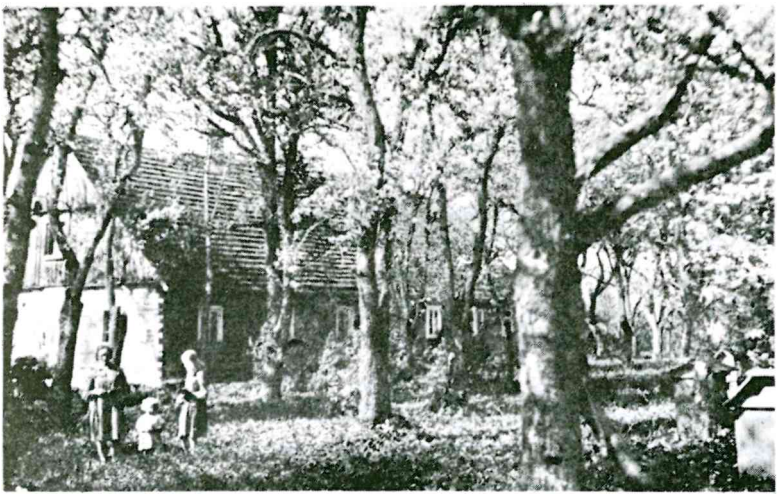
He spent his vacations on the family farm, and being a voracious reader a book was his constant companion. Naturally, he would do as much of the farm work as his health would permit. His sister-in-law, Veronica, tried to show motherly gentleness to the young orphan by providing special tid-bits and small gifts.

Adversity does not prostrate everyone; some are able to stand strong. George was one of these. He progressed from class to class in school and in his fourth year his brother, Vladas, rented a room for him in town and paid his tuition. This made for better school work.

But it was about this time that his schooling was interrupted. One reason was lack of finances, and the other, a serious relapse in his health. The undetected bone ailment in his leg flared up so much that he could get around only on crutches. The local doctor was able to heal the lesions that opened up, but tuberculosis of the bones was still undetected.

Always ambitious and energetic, George did not want to be a burden to the family. Handicapped as he was and ignoring the pain, he contributed to the work of planting and harvesting the crops and the care of the farm animals. He did his work without drawing undue attention to himself and the fact that he needed crutches to get around.

No kind of labor was beneath him. In his drab work-clothes he joined the hired hands for his meals. He complained to no one of his lot, even though he was a scholar imbued with a thirst for learning and higher ideals.



Archbishop's birthplace in Lugine-Orinai

He suffered silently, and in deep faith entrusted into the hands of a merciful God his future and the whole of his life.

The Matulaitis farmstead was neat and attractive. So much so, that some of the townspeople wanted to spend their summer holidays there. Occasionally some of them would be accepted. One such was Mrs. Kocelis, wife of the town notary. Pleased by the fact that this restful retreat was so close to town and church, she made arrangements for transportation to daily Mass. She noticed the gentle, pleasant mien of the youngest son and asked for him to take the reins. He avoided this task because he was embarrassed to appear in Mariampole in his only work-a-day clothing. Noticing this, she provided him with a new wardrobe.

There was more than physical pain in George's life. His spirit was also disturbed because the prospects for further education were not bright, and he wanted to study for the priesthood. In his eighteenth year he hesitantly approached his brother John with his desires, but he found little or no

encouragement. "What kind of priest would this cripple be; he is fit only for farm labor," was John's thought. Veronica was more sympathetic.

Having reached young manhood, George didn't mingle with his peers, some of whom would mock his lameness. This did not disturb him. He did not take part in village festivities, nor did he use tobacco or alcoholic beverages. His free time was spent with his books, most of which he borrowed in Mariampole. On Sundays he visited with the neighbors who shared with him their concerns and needs. They were impressed with his maturity and good spirits, and were proud that this bookish young man chose to spend time in their company. In those days, the villagers and farmers showed an uncommon respect for young scholars.

One old man was asked what he remembered of the Archbishop's youth, and he replied: "He suffered much. In a word, his life was a hard one." This was the testimony of all who knew him.

Chapter 2

Seminary Days

In the summer of 1889, John Matulevicius (Matulewicz), George's cousin, arrived in Lugine from Poland. He taught Latin and Greek in the regional high-school of Kielce. While visiting with the family, he took a liking to the young student and became interested in his welfare. George's older brother was persuaded to allow the cousin to see after the young man's further schooling. It was thus that at the age of 18 George found himself in Kielce.

John was diligent in caring for his cousin. George's health improved and he was able to make up his school credits. The future looked promising. After two years of private tutoring at home, he was able to pass successfully the entrance examinations for the seminary. Here he was registered under the Polonized surname of Matulewicz instead of Matulaitis. Thenceforth he would use the Lithuanian version, Matulevicius. Later there were speculations about the Polonized variation of his name. Was this done just by the cousin, or were there other reasons? Was it prestige or for easier entry into the Polish seminary? Essentially, George's Lithuanian selfidentity was not changed a bit.

With his cousin's assistance, George could have pursued some secular career because even the university was not out of the question for him. However, the young man responded to the promptings of God's grace und chose the priesthood. He entered the seminary on October 1,

1891. There were no difficulties scholastically. Under the cousin's supervision, he followed his bent for books and read widely even beyond what was prescribed. He was particularly intrigued by the Latin classics and became known among his classmates as the "Ciceronian."

For whatever reason, it appeared that he was not liked by his Latin teacher who subjected him to considerable harassment. Perhaps it was a dislike for George's heritage, his speech patterns, or evident selfconfidence; or it might have been a teacher's prodding to make the student reach for excellence. The fact remains that he demanded more of George than he did of the others. Deeming this unfair, the young seminarian did not complain or berate that teacher, but quietly studied so much harder.

Even the modest cost of life in the seminary was a problem. The greater part was borne by his cousin. His mother's brother, Father Felix Matulevicius, contributed; as did his own brother, John.

On vacation, George visited regularly in Lugine, but he spent more time with Vladas who lived closer to the church in Mariampole. During the school year he would be found on weekends and holidays with his cousin John's family where he was always a welcome guest.

Traveling expenses were ordinarily paid by his brother John, though this was a hardship. On one occasion George was moved to tears when his brother brought him a promised thirty rubles in copper coins.

Maintaining the farm became increasingly difficult. John tried his best, but finally sold it in 1905 to the Juozaitis family and moved to Mariampole where he bought a house and made loans from the surplus funds. The sudden onslaught of World War I (1914-1918), left him bankrupt. These reverses must have shortened his life and he died in 1919. But he lived long enough to see his youngest brother invested with the Episcopal mitre. The widow, Veronica, lived until January 9, 1933.

In his first year in the seminary, George soon earned the respect of his fellow classmates and his professors. His

classmates recognized his superior talents, but felt no envy because of his cordiality, modesty, and kindness. The scholastic records, kept in the diocesan archives, attest that his grades were excellent in all subjects.

The local milieu and ancient Polish traditions, steeped in the spirit of Catholicism and patriotism, pervaded the seminary training. George's quick mind learned much of Polish culture and the influence of the West upon it.

It is regrettable that no personal journal was found of George's years in high-school and the seminary. Most likely, he didn't keep one. Without question, he felt the pressures of Russian occupation as a student in Lithuania. In Kielce he was faced with the same pressures in occupied Poland. The 1863 uprising in Poland and Lithuania and its brutal suppression engulfed both countries in bloody conflict, widespread arrests, trials, executions, exiles, confiscation of property, persecution of the Catholic Church, the closing of monasteries and convents, the silencing of the Lithuanian press.

Kotkov, editor of the Moscow News and a widely known political reactionary, was the leader of Russian chauvinism in these two countries. In 1867 he proclaimed this program:

> Russia must be a strong unified nation. To bring this about, there will be one common language for the whole population, one common religion, one Slavic society. We shall destroy all that stands in our path. No mercy to anyone. To sweep away, to destroy; this is imperative!

Czar Alexander III (1881-1894) was the most zealous promoter of the Kotkov plan. His right hand in Poland was Joseph Hurko, of an old White Russian family and a renegade Catholic. He was appointed governor-general of Warsaw in 1883, and remained in those duties until 1894 when Nicholas II became Czar. Second in command was Alexander Apuchtin (1879-1897), a blunt bureaucrat and a violent enemy of the Poles, who became Commissioner of Education in Warsaw. These two were the basic strategists

in the plan to russify the people and exterminate opposition.

Because the Catholic clergy were traditionally the leaders of the people for centuries, the first blows were aimed at them and their seminaries. The commonizers believed that the clergy would be easily intimidated and thus popular resistance would break down. The Russian government demanded that the seminaries be opened to government inspectors. The Polish bishops strongly objected that this was an incursion on the Catholic Church's liberty and independence, which was guaranteed in all the cultured countries of the world. This was always cited in answer to the repeated demands of the government.

Then the Russian government resorted to trickery. It infiltrated the seminaries with spies and provocateurs; carried out illegal searches; attempted to compromise the bishops and prove that their seminaries were rife with a revolutionary spirit; that therefore government control was imperative. This task was delegated to local government functionaries and their recruits.

In the autumn of 1890, the 17-year-old son of a local miller, Paul Gawronski, was enrolled in the Kielce seminary. His brother, Stanislaus, was an agent of the Russian secret police and planned his activities. This student was an unstable, restless, cynical hypocrite. Under the pretext of ill health, he left his studies and returned after a year (1891). That made him George's classmate. Gawronski tried to develop a friendship with George. The latter, typically, was reserved and polite, but wouldn't allow a closer relationship.

Toward the end of 1892 a number of fires beset the seminary. In the course of one year there were five. The first two, in September and October, were small and easily contained. It was thought the cause was carelessness. The third fire, on New Year's Eve 1893, swept through the entire dormitory. In mid-January there was another fire. Investigation showed a clear case of arson.

In the early morning of January 26, flames were seen in Holy Trinity church which was adjacent to the seminary. This was soon extinguished, but at this time it was clear it was an inside affair because the arsonist could enter only from the seminary.

The seminary authorities made an intensive investigation among all the residents. When Gawronski was interrogated, he vehemently denied any guilt. However, among his effects were found matches and candle-ends, and there was a strong odor of kerosene in his clothes locker. Finally, he confessed that he was the arsonist and also that on two separate occasions he had denounced the seminary authorities to the governor-general of Warsaw. It was then that he admitted that he had followed his brother's orders.

There were deliberations about what to do with Gawronski, and finally Bishop Kulinski decided to turn him over to the civil authorities. Gawronski was arrested, tried, and imprisoned.

After the case was prepared, suddenly on March 13,

Seminary at Kielce

1894, at four o'clock in the morning, the seminary was surrounded by about a hundred policemen. They invaded the quarters of all the professors and posted guards in all the corridors and at all the exits of the seminary. These functionaries conducted a search which lasted twelve days. Beside the search of their quarters and possessions, the seminarians were stripped of their clothing; their religious medals and scapulars were confiscated because the Russian authorities had forbidden them as tokens of alien allegiance. The professors were treated no less brutally.

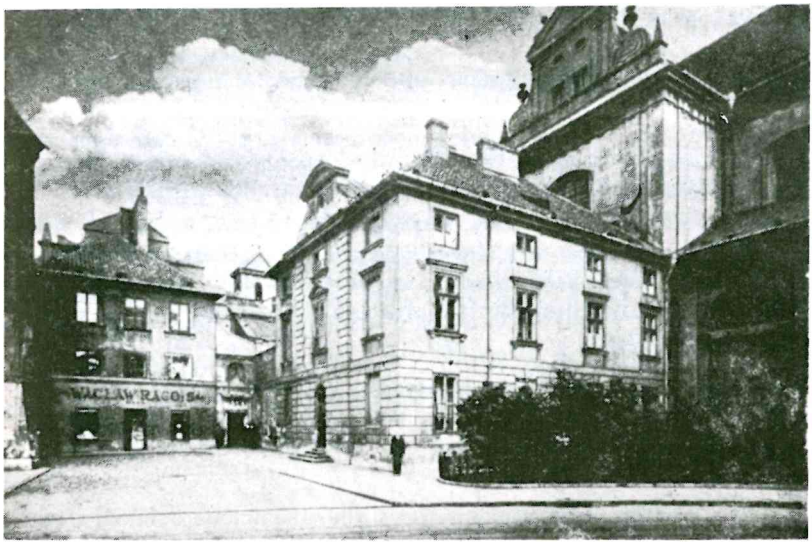
The outcome was harsh. On the night of March 22, a closely guarded convoy of vehicles transported all the professors and many students to the citadel of Warsaw. Later, the priests were confined in various Russian prisons. Hurko, the governor-general, sent an official directive to the bishop of Kielce ordering that the seminary be closed for four years.

The seminarians, who were not personally denounced by Gawronski and who were found blameless in the search and trial, were allowed to continue their studies in the seminaries of other dioceses. Among them was George Matulaitis whom Bishop Kulinski sent to the prestigious seminary of Warsaw.

The violence to Kielce Seminary was not accidental. It was a part of the plan to attack all Catholic seminaries in the Russian empire; to terrorize the bishops into allowing government supervision; to train the seminarians according to the wishes of the regime. In order to frighten the priests of the locale who had had any contact with the seminary at Kielce or its students, they were subjected to frequent harassment. Hurko wrote Durnov, the Minister for Interior Affairs, to forbid the bishop of Kielce to transfer his priests from one parish to another.

The story at Kielce was repeated in many other seminaries, always based on trumped-up charges and accusations. For example, it was required that Russian literature and history be taught in Russian, but the teachers were Catholics. By edict the governor-general

ordered that all Catholic teachers be removed and replaced by Russian Orthodox instructors. It was only through a firm resistance by the bishops and a direct intervention from Rome that this plan was thwarted.



Seminary at Warsaw

There were three vacancies in the famous seminary of Warsaw for the displaced clerics of Kielce. Therefore, Bishop Kulinski was determined to send his most gifted men there. Among these was George Matulaitis. Later, Bishop Francis Bucys wrote of him:

> Finding himself in the seminary in Warsaw by chance, he encountered there the elite of Polish intellectual life. That was in 1893. The Poles at that time realized clearly that their physical forces could not match those of the Russians, but they felt that they possessed many more cultural riches. Because the conflict between the two Slavic peoples was very fierce, the Poles could hope to survive only by increasing and perfecting their cultural resources. George Matulaitis had opportunity there to experience the importance of cultural values. Having the sharper mind, he appreciated this more than his peers or even those who were his teachers.

There was a total of 132 clerics in the seminary, and in the third class there were 32. Among these George found kindred souls whose scholarship and deeper spirituality were compatible with his own. In that number was Henry Przezdziecki, later a bishop, in whose memoirs is found this reference to George Matulaitis:

> From the beginning of our acquaintanceship we were impressed with his lofty mind, unusual talents, and a nobility of spirit. Soon he was pre-eminent among us. Quiet, unusually industrious, friendly, imbued with a deep love of God, he quickly captivated our hearts. We knew that he was a Lithuanian. We respected his sentiments, and he respected ours. In him we loved Lithuania, and in us he loved Poland, both of which countries were jointly undergoing suffering and persecution. I was astonished at his spiritual and intellectual progress in the seminary and later in St. Petersburg.

George excelled in his studies. This is indicated in the official Church documents of Warsaw where his evaluation as a seminarian is recorded:

> Concerning Matulaitis, it is the unanimous opinion of the authorities and professors that, if he is as zealous in his studies and as exemplary in his deportment next year as he has been this year, the Bishop of Kielce should be advised to enroll him now as a candidate for the School of Theology at the Institute in St. Petersburg.

Thus it was that he was appointed to this school of advanced studies and received a scholarship. Father Edmund Gorski, a classmate and later a Redemptorist, wrote:

> In 1895 all the bishops of Poland were assembled in Warsaw on the occasion of the crowning of Czar Nicholas II. They took this opportunity to discuss the urgent matters of teaching and training in their seminaries.

To honor the assembled Church dignitaries, Professor Rembielinski arranged an academic convocation. The sponsor was the local Ordinary, Archbishop Vincent Chosciak-Popiel. George Matulaitis was chosen to take part

in a debate on the Holy Trinity ("Colloquium de Sanctissima Trinitate"), and defended his thesis against three adversaries. His paper and presentation were of such brilliance that at the end of the convocation, the bishops came to the podium and warmly congratulated the seminarian for his scholarship and classical Latin. Bishop Kulinski was also commended for having sent to Warsaw a student of such high caliber and great promise, an outstanding honor for the seminary.

George Matulaitis completed his seminary training in 1895 with highest honors and received Minor Orders (the four lower stages of the clerical state). The path to post-graduate education was clear. With the approbation of the seminary authorities, he was accepted in the St. Petersburg Institute together with his classmate Henry Przezdziecki. Though a graduate of the Warsaw Seminary, he was officially a candidate for the priesthood of the Kielce diocese.

* * *

George Matulaitis arrived in St. Petersburg on September 1, 1895 (September 13, according to the

Ecclesiastical Institute at St. Petersburg

Gregorian calendar), when the school year customarily began. There were 26 students in the first year, including his schoolmates Henry Przezdziecki from Warsaw and Francis Bucys from Mariampole. In his memoirs, Bucys wrote that Matulaitis arrived at the Institute in its brightest period. The regime established by the Rector, Francis Albin Symon (1842-1918), had reached its apogee:

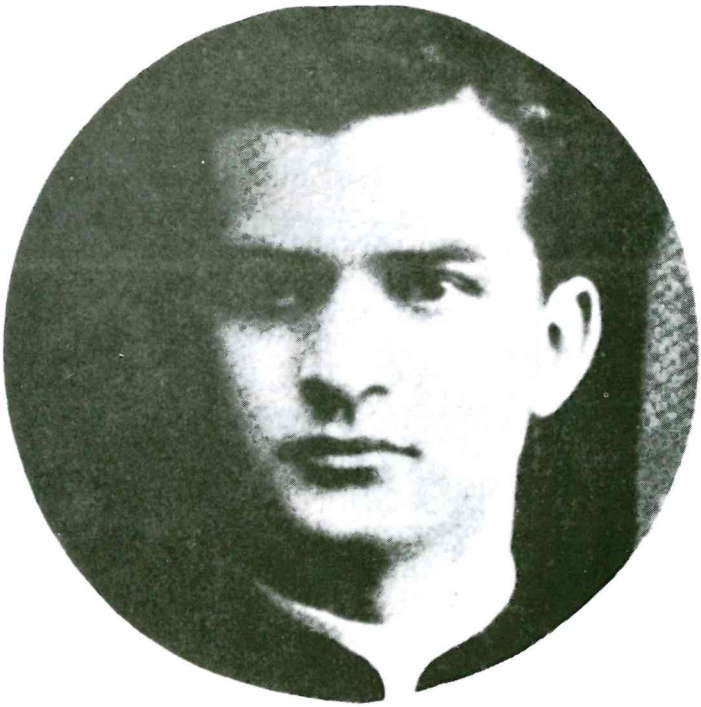
> In recalling those days — and the recollections are not exaggerated — the work-load for the students was so immense that today it seems unbelievable. The discipline was more rigorous than that of the army.

George brought with him well-developed habits of hard work from his birthplace and former schools. In the Institute he learned to evaluate and appreciate discipline.

Joseph Skruodis, in his third year at the Institute, was a student who was exceptional in trying to live out the ideals of Christian perfection. He formed a group which attracted Matulaitis and other students of like idealism. To form character permeated with idealism and asceticism was the thrust of their group discussions and activities.

It might be necessary here to mention again that the Lithuanian printed word had been suppressed since 1864. The Russian police searched for it assiduously, as though it threatened to explode the entire Russian Empire. One of the victims of this search was George Matulaitis. His rooms at the Institute were subjected to a raid by some of the more important functionaries of the regime. This incident is minutely reported by his classmate, Francis Bucys:

> In St. Petersburg the Catholics had the same privileges enjoyed by the inhabitants of enlightened countries. The religious life of the people was not hampered. Most likely there hadn't been a police raid in the Institute since its inception. However, when I was in my second year (1896), one day the campus filled with law enforcement agents. Outside, the building was surrounded. The Chief of Police and the District Attorney entered the building and informed the Vice-Rector, Canon Klopotowski, that they came to search George's rooms. He was in the garden at the time and was told to come in immediately.



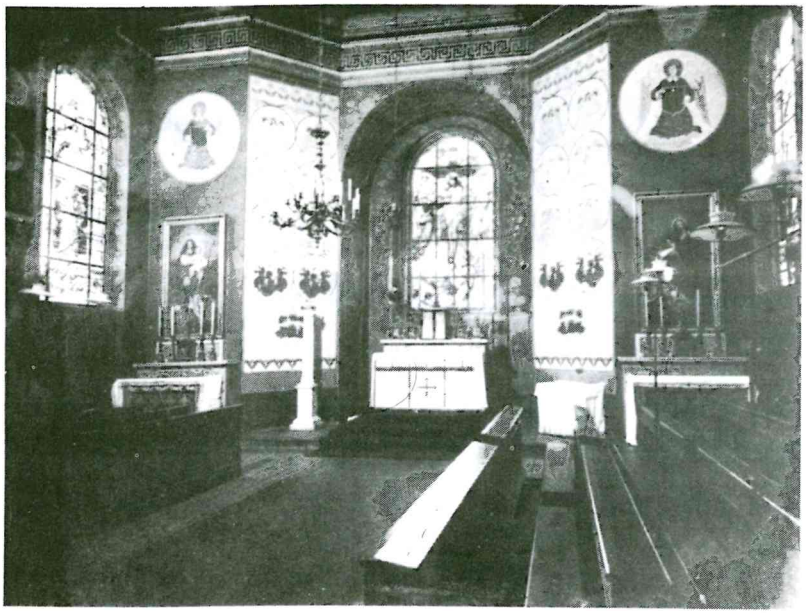
Archbishop George as a seminarian

The police officials with the Vice-Rector and George went to his study which he shared with two classmates. The police were interested principally in George's desk and found only Latin text books. In a storage cabinet some papers were found and the Vice-Rector explained that they were lecture notes written in Latin.

These were given to the Vice-Rector who carried them throughout the incident. A report that nothing incriminating was found among George's effects was signed by the officials, the Vice-Rector, and George. The visitors departed.

About an hour later the Vice-Rector called George and returned his manuscripts. It seems that among the Latin notes there was an article in Lithuanian meant for the newspaper "Tevynes Sargas." The Vice-Rector returned this to George with a warning that he should be more careful.

This raid was carried out at the request of Andrew Vonsiacki, chief of police in Mariampole, by whom several



First Mass was held at St. Petersburg Chapel

members of the underground had been arrested. Somehow, unwittingly, they implicated George Matulaitis. Francis Bucys corresponded with Vincent Slekys in America, using the pseudonym "Francis Cernyzin," and reported the raid by the "sanitation committee," in which only the notes of Professor Jaunius were taken. The latter was a language teacher, and it seems that his notes were not in much need of "disinfection." Bucys also wrote that the police were anxious to apprehend "Stagaras," the pen-name used by Slekys.

All of this is confirmed by Slekys in his memoirs, where he also explains that he was sought because of the underground group he had founded in Mariampole. His parents' home was subjected to repeated searches and, in fact, his father was jailed for a month because of his son's activities. Friends were fearful of receiving letters from Slekys and asked him not to write because it was dangerous

for them. For this reason his letters to George Matulaitis became less frequent and finally ceased.

George Matulaitis excelled in his studies, but was not overbearing. He was repeatedly commended by the authorities for his scholarship; but he remained, characteristically, humble and helpful. His classmates availed themselves frequently of his talents and generosity in their problems.

At the end of his third year, he was appointed prefect of the entire student body. This was graciously accepted by the various nationals and there was no evidence of resentment. The duties of this position became too onerous in view of the amount of work involved in preparation for his final examinations. Later he resigned from it.

Nearing the completion of his studies at the Institute, he was ordained to the subdiaconate in the Lent of 1897, and a year later he received his diaconate. In that same year, on November 20, 1898, he was ordained a priest by the Rector, Bishop Karol Niedzialkowski. He celebrated his First Mass in St. Petersburg and completed his studies there in the spring of 1899.

To receive his Master's degree in theology, he wrote his thesis under the tutelage of Professor John Maciulevicius-Maironis, titled: " De Jure Belli et de Pace Aeterna" (The Right of War and Eternal Peace). It was accorded the highest honor, "Cum eximia laude, cum nota primus." He also received the Gold Medal. The Rector advised him to further his studies and promised him his own Chair of Apologetics if he chose to return.

Chapter 3

Early Priesthood

Father George Matulaitis was not the type to be content with a master's degree in his quest for knowledge. The process of maturation for him was marked by an openness to the realities of life. He had read widely and was familiar with the learning and free thought of Western Europe. Even at the Institute, his pursuit of high ideals and knowledge impelled him to learn some German and French, which would give him greater access to the cultural riches of other nations. He dreamed of breaking out of the suffocating strictures of the Russian Orthodox ambient.

Taking leave of the professors and students at the Institute, and his many friends in St. Petersburg, he returned to Lithuania and his birthplace. The days and weeks passed quickly. He knew that he would have to present himself to his Ordinary, the Bishop of Kielce, for an appointment in Poland even though he would have preferred to work in his own country. To the rhythmic beat of the wheels on the railroad through the level expanses of Poland, his head was awhirl with plans for the future: to study abroad, later to take the chair of apologetics at the Institute, or some form of public service.

In those deliberations, he faced a dilemma: should he reveal these desires to his bishop? His deeper instincts dictated that he should not; better to leave this to the providence of God, which he dare not contravene. There were other serious obstacles: the shortage of priests in the diocese, the lack of funds for studies abroad, and his frail health.

The seminary at Kielce had been reinstated in the autumn of 1897. Bishop Kulinski was overjoyed at the prospect of a priest of that stature working in his diocese. However, the incardination of Father Matulaitis was complicated by the laws and whims of the Russian government. First of all, he had to become a citizen of Poland; his appointment as curate in the parish of Daleszyce, a short distance from Kielce, had to be approved by the governor-general of Warsaw. The formalities were soon completed and Father Matulaitis was accorded legal status and the government-provided salary of a curate.

In the parish of Daleszyce, conditions were unbearable. He was housed in a hovel which was anything but weatherproof. The damp cottage and inadequate food soon brought on the illness of his youth. It is hard to speculate why Bishop Kulinski appointed him to such a place.

After suffering with typical patience for two months, the young curate finally sought medical help. Still convinced that this was only an aggravated case of rheumatism and supported by the diagnosis of the local doctor, he sought and obtained permission to go abroad for proper treatment. He was encouraged in this decision by his cousin, John Matulevicius, who then taught Russian literature and history at the seminary until he was removed by the government in 1901. It was from him that financial assistance was available.

Father Matulaitis went to Bad Kreuznach in Rheinland-Pfalz near the Saar, famous for its clinics and radioactive springs. The mainstay of the treatment was bathing in the waters of that spa, but these baths proved of no benefit for his constant pain. It is odd that the doctors at Kreuznach couldn't diagnose his real illness, and did not even do a blood analysis. Realizing the futility of this regimen, Dr. Kreuzer gave a written professional statement, confirmed by the local government officials, that Father Matulaitis seek more intensive treatment for at least six months at Merano in the Alps, which then was a part of Austria. He presented this to the authorities and sought an

extension of his external passport. Permission was granted to go to Merano for four weeks.

Disdaining such a gesture, he decided to pursue immediately one of his projected options, post-graduate studies in Switzerland. Being a native of a small country where people of other nationalities were easily recognized and accepted as neighbors of some equal status, he was disillusioned with the Russian Empire in which many nations were commonized to the point of nondistinction.

From the perspective of time, one might judge that in this desire he was a forerunner by about two generations of a trend to appreciate the value of ethnicity in the culture

University of Friburg

of any "united" country. From his later activities and pronouncements, it is clear that it was not his intention to promote raging ethnic paranoia or any form of ethnocentrism.

The Catholic University of Fribourg, on the Sarine river and southwest of Berne, the capital of Switzerland, was his choice. The School of Theology had Pontifical faculties for granting doctoral degrees, and the system of teaching was Dominican. In Fribourg there was a mixture of German and French cultural elements, with a

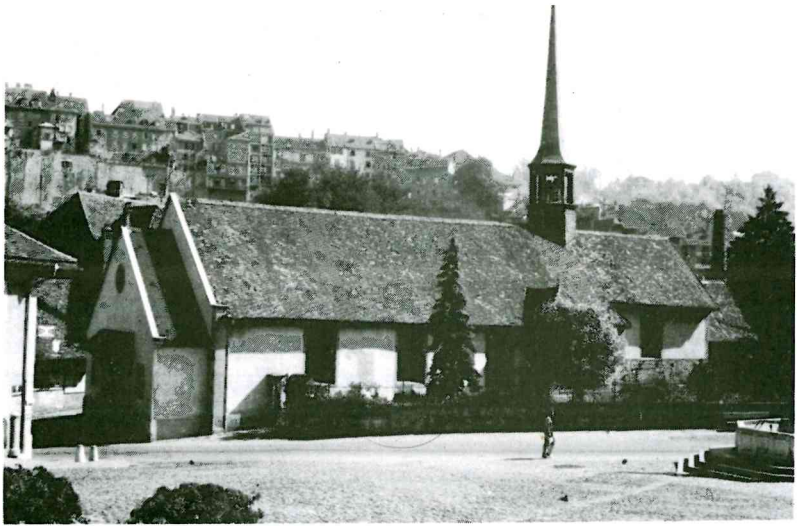
preponderance of French in the city itself. He was intrigued by Western culture, even as plains-people are by the Alps. In the Institute in St. Petersburg the Jesuit system of theology was used exclusively and the prevailing language was Polish until the end of the 19th century. He was tired of Slavic influences in his patriotic leanings.

He arrived in Fribourg in the very last days of December 1899. He enrolled at the University and took residence in Canisianum Hall. He registered in the University under his real name, but used the pseudonym "Montvydas" in his residence hall to conceal his whereabouts from the Russian police. Priests were allowed to leave Russia only for reasons of health and not for study.

Here he met his close friend and former schoolmate, Father Bucys, who was completing his first semester. It was a joyous happenstance because the latter helped Father Matulaitis to get settled and later served history well in his extensive memoirs.

The Canisianum was one of three residence halls occupying a tall building adjacent to the gothic-styled church of St. Michael. The ground-level contained stables, above which was a bank. The residential quarters were on the fifth and sixth floors. The Swiss Sisters of the Holy Cross Congregation took care of the meals and other domestic services.

There were two divisions in his residence hall; one for priests studying theology, and the other for laymen studying ecclesiology. The rules in the priests' section were noticeably less stringent. Meals were taken separately and there was no reading during meals, only the customary grace before and after. In those days the full cost of boarding at the Canisianum was 115 francs a month, not including personal expenses and the occasional purchase of books. There was no tuition at the University. The priests realized about seventy-five francs a month in Mass stipends, leaving about forty francs to be added from other sources.

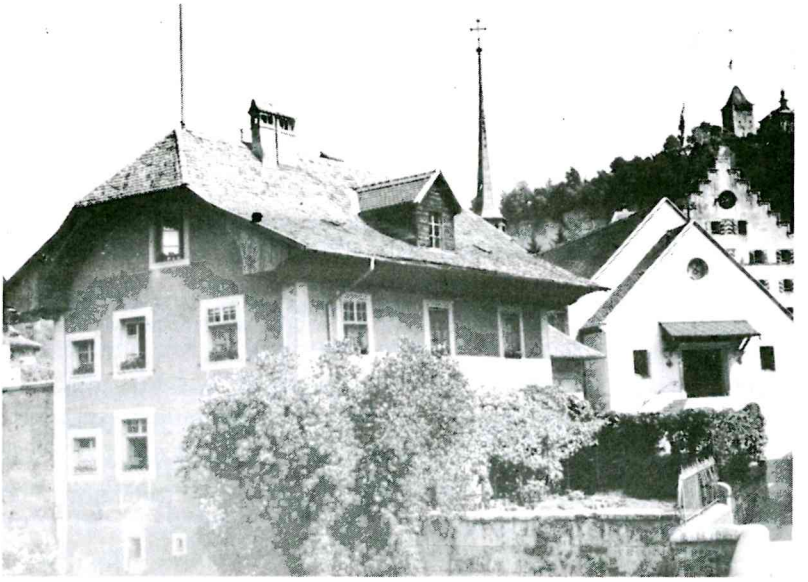


St. John's Church in Friburg

Six Lithuanian priest studied at Fribourg at the time. Except for Father Matulaitis, all were from the diocese of Seinai. Four of these had already worked in parishes in Lithuania, and were able to provide for their schooling from their savings. Father Bucys and Father Matulaitis had no opportunity to do this because they arrived at the University almost directly from the Institute in St. Petersburg.

Shortly, Father Matulaitis was invited to work in St. John parish in the lower section of the city (St. Jean de Basse Ville). The pastor offered him residence and meals in the rectory, with the provision that as time permitted he would visit the sick and perform other parochial duties. It soon developed that he carried the full work-load of a curate, except for preaching. For his small, dark room and board he was required to pay fifty francs a month.

The strain of work at the University and the many chores in the parish, without proper rest, soon exhausted his fragile health. During the summer vacation of 1900 he began to experience practically unbearable pains in his right



In 1900-1902 Father George lived at St. John's Rectory

arm and right leg — a resurgence of his "rheumatism." The church and rectory were located in the damp valley of the Sarine, though some distance from the river itself. Most likely, this dampness brought on the pains.

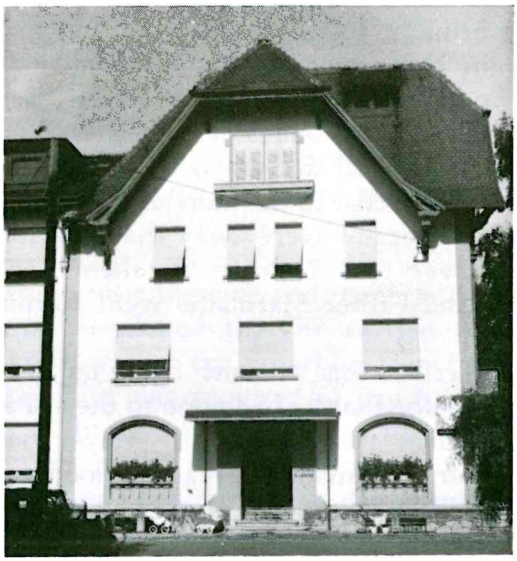
The students at the University had established a small mutual aid society to pay sick benefits, to which each contributed a few francs each semester. They had an agreement with two of the local doctors who would give them medical service without cost to the individual student. It happened that both physicians were away that summer and had asked Dr. Mayer to substitute for them. One evening Father Bucys and Father Matulaitis went to him for consultation.

Father George described his ailment from its very inception and told the doctor that he had gone to the spa at Kreuznach for rheumatism treatments. Dr. Mayer had some doubts that it was rheumatism and made a blood test that revealed that it was tuberculosis of the bones. He advised his patient that it was a serious condition which

required surgery because of its long standing; and that there was a famous surgeon in Fribourg, dr. Clement, who performed such operations in his clinic. Both priests were worried because it was reported that the surgeon charged high fees, and neither had money.

Finally, Father Matulaitis was emboldened to go to Dr. Clement, who received him graciously and confirmed the diagnosis that surgery was necessary. There was no room at the clinic at the moment, but as soon as space was available, Father Matulaitis was notified and preparations were made for the operation. Once more Father Bucys accompanied his friend to the clinic and remained in the waiting room throughout, possibly more apprehensive than the patient himself. The surgery lasted two and a half hours. When the patient was wheeled into his room, he was conscious but too weak to talk.

During the month-long stay in the hospital, the doctor visited him daily and frequently administered medication by injection. Later, there were weekly visits for a whole year to the doctor's office for injections. These were extremely painful because the medication, to be more effective, had to



St. Anne's Clinic in Friburg

be heated to the boiling-point of water. There was also anxious concern for Father George about the fee. The medication was very expensive and so much of it was needed. Asked about his fee, Dr. Clement smiled and responded: "Two hundred francs for surgery and medication."

Life at the University was friendly. Discussions were uninhibited. In their free time the students went about freely without concern about surveillance by the police. The nationals from different countries organized a variety of student clubs. In the beginning the Lithuanians joined with the Poles, but there was tension. Because of this, the Lithuanians had formed their own "Ruta" club in 1897.

Father Matulaitis did not participate extensively in the aforementioned club activities at the University because, together with his studies, he was involved rather fully in parish work. His serious illness and prolonged recovery interrupted his schedule so that he spent more time at the University than he had planned.

For his basic courses he had chosen apologetics, together with dogmatic theology and sociology. His studies displayed an accustomed depth and competence. It was mentioned before that his command of the Latin language was exceptional, and in Switzerland he picked up German and French as well.

The professors in the School of Theology, with the exception of two, were Dominicans. Therefore, Thomism with its philosophical methods prevailed. The Dean of Studies was a diocesan priest, Father Joseph Beck, renowned in Switzerland as a Catholic Activist, who taught pastoral theology and sociology. It is likely that he instigated Father George's deep inroads into Christian sociology.

Outstanding among the others in a distinguished faculty was the Dominican monk, Albert Maria Weiss (1844-1925), who taught apologetics and who authored the classic five-volume "Apologie des Christentums" and other important works. It was the rule that this course be taught

Father George circa 1902-1904

in Latin with seminars and discussions conducted in German, but Father Weiss lectured mostly in German with Latin explanations. He taught at Fribourg for almost thirty years (1890-1919). Both Father Matulaitis and Father Bucys were in his classes.

In his writings, this German Dominican of Bavarian extraction, was not just a theologian, but also a sociologist who propagated the Christian social movement according to the insights of Pope Leo XIII. It was the gist of his thought that it was not sufficient for Catholics just to defend themselves from atheism and radicalism which were

creeping in under the cloak of Modernism. They should depend, he said, not just on apologetics, but be girded by a positive deep faith.

Father Bucys completed his studies at Fribourg and received his doctorate in July of 1901. Father Matulaitis was delayed and continued his studies for another year, simultaneously working on his dissertation with Professor Weiss.

It was hard work for him and he applied himself as best he could. His bishop in Kielce was awaiting his return; and the Chancellor Canon Bronislaw Obuchowicz wrote and asked when they might expect him. It is possible that the police were also interested because he disappeared from their sight when he went abroad for his health. In his letter to the Chancellor, Father Matulaitis said that he was anxious to return to his duties, but that the doctor insisted that he remain for further treatment lest the tuberculosis spread throughout his organism. The doctor was not sure whether more surgery might be needed.

Under those conditions Father Matulaitis completed his studies and on July 21, 1902, presented his doctoral dissertation: "Doctrina Russorum de Statu Justitiae Originalis" (Russian Doctrine on the State of Original Justice). His thesis was given the highest accolade, "praeclarissime."

A close friend of his, Father Henry Przezdziecki (1873-1939), who later became Bishop of Podles, was a fellow-student at Fribourg and wrote of Father Matulaitis:

> Both at the seminary and at the Institute in St. Petersburg, he was outstanding in his tolerance and charity. Later I met him as a post-graduate student in Fribourg. Always the quiet, serious scholar, imbued with priestly zeal, he assisted the Swiss clergy in their pastoral work. Never and nowhere did I notice any egoism or self-seeking. The results of the examinations required for doctoral candidates in theology were, in his case, so exceptional that the professors at Fribourg wrote to Rome urging that heed be taken of this young priest's abilities.
>
> I had occasion to meet him often. I was astonished at his luminosity of soul, his enthusiasm, his deep scholarship, his clear

> solution of difficult theological questions, his understanding of juridical and social problems. Prayer and labor, the love of God and neighbor, occupied every hour of his life. There was no relaxation in that life.

His doctoral thesis was printed in Cracow in 1903. The book created much interest among the theologians and scholars of Western Europe. They were especially impressed by the author's erudition and wide acquaintanceship with Russian theological literature, which for them was "terra incognita."

There have been many land seizures and disenfranchisements throughout history; and, while they did not necessarily destroy nations, they did inflict serious wounds. It would seem that senseless cruelty is an instinct in the oppressor. No general indictment is intended here, but an incident from the life of Father Matulaitis will illustrate this. When he returned to Kielce from Fribourg he was immediately entangled in the constricting web of surveillance. Brother Bronislaus Zaluski writes:

> Existing documents in the diocesan archives at Kielce reveal the conditions of his time and his personal situation. It is known that every step of a Catholic priest was closely observed and suspected. How much time, work, and correspondence between various government agencies was required even for less significant incidents is shown in the report of his visit to a sick uncle, Father Felix Matulevicius, pastor of Piaseczno...

Using these documents as sources, Father Wisniewski gives this report in extensive detail. The authorities in Kielce were getting uneasy. They might have heard rumors of the whereabouts of Father Matulaitis. On April 17, 1902, the governor inquired of the bishop about the priest's status. The letter, written in the required Russian, enumerated various infractions committed by the young priest and the bishop. Father Matulaitis had received a visa to go to Merano for twenty-eight days but had not returned. He is still considered the curate in Daleszyce. He is still on the government payroll and his salary had been claimed on seemingly personal recognizance. The bishop

was also reminded that abuses of the terms of a foreign visa were to be reported to the governor-general of Warsaw. The clergy who absent themselves for reasons of health longer than four months were to be removed from their positions. In the light of these regulations the bishop was ordered to explain immediately to the governor-general why Father Matulaitis is still considered the curate of Daleszyce and why he still claims the customary stipend.

In an answering letter, May 14, 1902, the bishop explained that the priest had not been relieved of his duties because there had been no response to official or personal letters; that it was only in the early part of the year that he had received medical reports which explained the absence and the silence. The doctor had explained to him the serious nature of the tuberculosis which had left Father Matulaitis incapacitated even to requesting an extension of his leave of absence. He noted also that all this was included in his letter (No. 382) to the governor-general on February 4, 1902; and that in another letter on February 28, he had announced that Father Matulaitis had been terminated; and that, in answer, the governor-general had extended the visa for another four months.

The governor of Kielce was not completely satisfied and inquired about who had been claiming the curate's salary. To this the bishop replied that Father Matulaitis had authorized his cousin John to do so and that is why "J. Matulewicz" appears on the records.

Father Matulaitis was aware that upon his return to the bureaucracy of the occupants he would have to do much explaining to the various authorities, so he provided himself with various certified documents. Dr. G. Clement wrote a lengthy report in French describing his illness, its progress, the methods of treatment, the surgery and medications; adding that at this moment (February 6, 1902), it was impossible to determine, but it was likely that three or four months of care were additionally necessary. This was attested by the mayor of Fribourg.

Among the documents that could not be shown to the

Russian authorities was his Doctoral diploma issued by the dean of the School of Theology, Professor P. Reginaldus, OP. Another was a testimonial letter written by the local bishop, Joseph Deruaz (Bishop of Lausanne and Geneva), highly commendatory of his priestly zeal, exemplary life, and apostolic labors.

When the young priest arrived in Kielce it was understandable that the bishop would shield him as much as possible from the police. For this reason he was appointed to the small parish of Imielno in the neighboring district of Jedrzejow. This would appear to have been a tactical maneuver to lessen police surveillance. The confirmation of this appointment was sought, without mentioning the candidate's schooling, and the governor of Kielce gave permission which included the customary yearly salary of 150 rubles.

When Father Matulaitis was notified that his uncle, Father Felix Matulevicius, pastor of Piaseczno, near Warsaw, was critically ill, he hastened to make arrangements to visit his favorite uncle. But he could not take the first train; he had to obtain government permission.

He appealed to the regional governor, and this worthy asked the bishop if such permission should be given. The bishop replied that he saw no reason for refusal and asked that the pass be given for at least two weeks. This was granted and written notice of it sent to the chancery in Kielce.

It would seem that Father George left before he received the pass and found his uncle in the last stages of illness. He remained with him until his death (November 5, 1902), and participated in the rather elaborate funeral, for his uncle had also been a Capitular Canon of Lowicz.

During this interval the pass expired and he found himself involved in more red tape when he applied for another pass from the local official in Piaseczno. He was told that this was impossible without a doctor's certificate. Father George went to the local physician and explained his

illness and received a certificate stating the due to a "flare-up of chronic rheumatism," he was not able to travel for at least two weeks. This certificate was confirmed and transmitted to the officials in Jedrzejow, notifying the same that Father Matulaitis was allowed to remain in Piaseczno. This correspondence, once more, was sent to the chancery in Kielce.

Because Bishop Kulinski had already invited Father Matulaitis to take on the duties of a professor in the seminary and was only awaiting permission for this move from the Russian government, Father Matulaitis resided in Kielce and not in Imielno. This soon was noticed by the local police who inquired why he was living here and not there. They were not aware that the pastor of Imielno had agreed to this because he was not in need of an assistant except during the holy seasons of Lent and Advent and, in fact, did not have proper quarters for him.

Finally the permission of the Russian government arrived, and on December 29, 1902, Father Matulaitis was offically appointed professor in the Kielce seminary.

Father Matulaitis was appointed professor of Latin and Canon Law. These subjects were not his specialty and this assignment was given possibly because it was the beginning of the second semester, January 1903.

Even as all teachers in their first assignment, Father Matulaitis was subjected to scrutiny and testing by his students. Both in the classroom and in the assembly the young clerics, fresh from four years in high school, used the same measuring-stick common to all students. Their attitudes and aims differed not at all from others: to slide through without effort, to crib, to misbehave and to indulge in pranks and practical jokes. The judgment they form on teachers is hasty and premature: this one is decent but soft, we can handle him; the other is stern and strict, we shall have to be careful; and another is incompetent, heaven help us survive.

How Father Matulaitis fared in this inquisition is described by Marjan Wisniewski, one of his students,

eventually a priest in the Marian Fathers Order who wrote:

> It was learned at the beginning of the second semester that an eminent theologian had been assigned as the new professor, and speculation was rampant about the newcomer.
>
> One day he walked into the classroom briskly, but with a limp, where thirty curious seminarians watched his every move. Smiling slightly, he looked over the young faces and their probing eyes. Sitting down he immediately began his work. He sat while lecturing because the constant pain in his leg made standing and walking difficult. His presentation was smooth, natural, and not didactic. His general mien was composed and scholarly. He expected the same of the seminarians and he liked to quote frequently the Latin proverb: "Quidquid agis, prudenter agas et respice finem" (Whatever you do, always do prudently and look to the results).
>
> His method was more practical than theoretic, without picayunish emphasis on minutiae. It was his desire that learning be thorough but without undue stress or waste of time. He emphasized that the seminarians develop a love of languages. The beauty of Latin and its influence on the formation of other languages in Europe, its ties with Roman and Catholic cultures, and its use in the mission of the Church were presented clearly and attractively. He urged the priests of the future to adopt it as their second language, for the Church is the spiritual mother of the family of God's children where all peoples and nations were to feel at home.
>
> It was his duty to teach Latin, so he could not spend the time in exhaustive lectures on the subject, but at every opportunity he would insert some uplifting thought or comment that sustained enthusiasm. He did not insist on wearisome details or demand slavish memorization of grammatical rules, but he did expect that fundamentals be fully absorbed.
>
> He was firm but gave his students enough leeway. Being sensitive to the shortcomings of students, to their failures at diligence and preparation, he would be kind and helpful when recitations were floundering and halting. When a distressed student would dry to sneak a glance at his notes or textbook, he himself would feign interest in his own book as though searching for something, in order to give opportunity to the youngster to save face. Often he would smile and ignore the audible whisper of a prompter.
>
> A warm, natural and human benevolence radiated from his person rather than some dry, forbidding pedantry. This won favor with his students and they strove all the more to learn. He was

given exceptional respect and cooperation. Not one of his students failed his Latin examinations that semester, though there were failures in other subjects.

In the fall, when advanced classes in the seminary began, Father Matulaitis appeared, pleasant as always, but this time be carried not a Latin textbook but the bulky Codex of Canon Law. Again he was able to dispel the specters of dry formalism and the dread of memorizing countless paragraphs and sub-paragraphs of legalisms. He was able to give life and interest to these by practical and applicable examples which opened new vistas for his students to appreciate that laws were necessary for man's social well-being. After the example of Christ he was able to convey that man was not made for laws, but that laws were made for man.

In his lectures it wasn't the individual canon or the individual paragraph that spoke, but the very philosophy of law. He did not hesitate to remind his hearers that the Church was not a moribund legal institution, but a living organism that evolved and matured; that it had the living God for its vital principle; that its mission was not bounded by time and space; that it encompassed both time and eternity, this world and the beyond.

During the second year of his teaching the tuberculosis flared up again. He made repeated trips to Warsaw for the help specialists might give him, but there wasn't much relief. After one longer stay in Warsaw (1904), he returned with metal braces on his arm and leg. He walked with a heavy limping step. At Mass he would elevate the host and the chalice with one arm; the other arm was heavily bandaged.

He continued his teaching for a time, but his illness became so acute that he had to resign, and never returned to the seminary. He signed the attendance ledger for the last time on November 5, 1904.

In the last weeks of 1904, he went to Warsaw and entered Transfiguration Charity Hospital because he had no funds; he was bedded in a large ward. The pains were so severe that he thought he was dying. Dr. Raum, director of the hospital, took his case but did not recognize the true nature of his illness and treated him for rheumatism.

His general condition weakened daily and he resigned himself to the will of God because he believed that only the power of God could help him. He still had a strong desire to live and make good use of his years of preparation to serve God and the Church in the salvation of souls. Additionally,

he prayed very ardently to Mary, the Mother of God, that he might fulfill his desire to revive the religious order that carried her name, the Marian Fathers.

In a letter dated December 15, 1904, he wrote to Capuchin Father Honoratus Kozminski, founder and guardian of secret religious communities:

> The doctor had more trouble with my leg than he had anticipated. The disease is stubborn and until recently I had been feeling quite poorly. The treatment by injections has been very painful and almost unbearable, but I suppose the human being can get accustomed to almost anything. There are no open sores on the leg but it is still full of pain. I don't know how much longer I shall have to remain here.

A famous surgeon, Doctor Sawicki, was on the staff of the hospital and was also house physician in a private high-school for girls of the nobility in Warsaw. This school was founded and directed by the Countess Cecilia Plater von Syberg. She was a nun, a member of the secret religious community of The Servants of the Heart of Jesus. At school the doctor spoke to the countess of a priest in the charity ward of the hospital who seemed to be condemned to die only because there were no funds to pay for more intensive and specialized care. The countess was touched and went to the hospital without delay.

When she was led to his bed in the ward, she was stunned to find that it was Father George whom she had met at her country estate in Piaseczno. The estate consisted of an expanse of farm-land and buildings where she had established an agricultural school for girls. It bordered on the parish property where Father Felix Matulevicius had been pastor for many years. It was called "Chyliczki."

The countess quickly requested the hospital administrator to release the patient to her care. Dr. Raum protested that Father Matulaitis was too weak and in need of further hospitalization, and that it was his responsibility to look after him because there seemed to be no relatives.

A woman would not be a woman, nun or laywoman, if she did not find a solution. A plan was soon put into effect

for the patient's release whereby a Mrs. Wroblewski approached the reluctant administrator and stated that she represented the family ("spiritual family"), which asked that he be released from the hospital.

It was thus that Father Matulaitis found himself in the Countess Cecilia's care and home in Warsaw. The location was 24 Piekna Street, which later became known as Pius XI Street. Here through careful nursing and the personal attention of Dr. Sawicki he began to recover. It was necessary to repeat the painful procedures he experienced in Switzerland under Dr. Clement. The injection of iodine into the bone marrow of the affected limbs caused not only severe pain but also a high fever. Thanks to these procedures he began slowly to regain his strength and powers to function.

When Father Matulaitis later wanted to repay Dr. Sawicki for the medical treatment, in fact for saving his life, the good doctor would not take any recompense.

Having recovered sufficiently, Father Matulaitis wrote a letter to his friend, Father Honoratus (April 28, 1905), from which this short excerpt is taken:

> Dear Father, I had planned to write sooner but somehow I kept putting it off. To tell the truth, when they began the injections, I was not living but merely vegetating. The mind is starting to function more clearly now, although I am not able to do any important work. I thank the Almighty that I am able to offer Mass and to move about in my room with the help of a cane. This was a serious crisis and I am grateful that through the efforts of the doctor and the care of the good nuns, the danger seems to have passed.

While Father Matulaitis was recuperating the countess told Eugene Jarra about the ailing priest who was now in her care. This young man was a gifted law student and social activist at the University of Warsaw, who secretly taught Polish history to the upper two classes of her high-school. At the first opportunity he visited Father Matulaitis and these were his impressions:

> Escorted to a spacious, sunny room on the first floor, with glass doors opening to the greenery of the garden, I saw a young man of some thirty years lying in bed covered by a blanket. He had a full rounded face with generous lips which broke into a welcoming smile and revealed strong white teeth. He had a fairly broad nose, the high forehead of a thinker, and a closely shorn full head of hair. His dark eyes were bright, friendly and thoughtful. His head rested on strong shoulders which turned slightly toward the approaching visitor. With a clear voice conveying his pleasure at the welcome break in his loneliness, he bade me sit in the chair near him... From the first moment, his personage was unusually attractive, and inspired trust and closeness. In short, he captivated my heart...

In that Spring of 1905, the young student visited quite frequently. They discussed many things, but most of all, the social and religious conditions in Poland.

On one occasion the visitor brought along miniature Bibles in various languages: Greek, Latin, French, Italian, English, and German. They were printed on very thin paper, elegantly bound, and small enough to fit within the palm of the hand. They pleased Father Matulaitis very much and he paged through them, inspecting them from every angle. Spreading them on his blanket, he played with them like a child with his toys. Later he chose two, the French and the Italian, and asked if he could keep them. Mr. Jarra, of course, gladly gave them to him and was very pleased that they gave the patient so much pleasure. Later he saw them on the priest's desk among his most frequently used books.

With continuing improvement, the patient was able to walk about a bit more in his room, wearing supportive bandages on his arm and leg. When summer came he was taken to Chyliczki for an extended stay. There, among the pines and on the sun-drenched sands, he was able to recoup much more of his strength and felt fit enough to resume work. Though his physical resources were strained, his mental faculties were in full ascendancy.

At this time the high-school in Warsaw lost its chaplain and the countess asked Father Matulaitis to help, to teach

religion, and he readily agreed. The need was vital because in the swirling winds of the Russian revolution not only did the hot-headed socialist agitators become more active, and the student-patriots more vociferous, but the girls became confused. About these events and the role the chaplain played, Mrs. J. Zukauskas-Jokantas writes:

> I was a student in the high-school of Warsaw. During the Russian revolution the upper classes of students in the State high-schools were disbanded because of dissident activities, and many of them flocked to private schools where they fomented a spirit of rebellion. The girls began to defy the director and teachers. Many abandoned their religious practices, claimed to be unbelievers, and even at times made fun of religion...
>
> Father Matulaitis was invited to be chaplain of our school. Just before his arrival the principal informed us that he was a priest of unusual ability and that he had recently left the hospital. She asked us to maintain order in the classroom because his illness prevented him from speaking loudly. I remember that at the beginning he was helped into the classroom by two men. His one arm hung loosely and one leg lacked free movement.
>
> He taught apologetics to the girls in their senior year. He didn't use textbooks, though there were many in the Polish language; he asked only that the girls keep note-books... His classes were attended not only by the students, but also by teachers... He was always composed, pleasant, and patient. If someone had any particular difficulties with the subject-matter, they were asked to write them down and place them on his desk. In the following class he would answer and explain them adequately.
>
> His influence in the school was quietly far-reaching. He always urged us to value time, to be patient and diligent. The spirit of rebellion in the school gradually disappeared.

During his tenure as chaplain the school itself expanded. Next to the high-school, a teachers college was founded which made higher education for women more available.

From his experiences as chaplain, Father Matulaitis realized more clearly that nuns were in the same apostolate for which he was sacrificing his life. Even in his deep humility he had to admit that he had some small part in all of this. He was particularly happy to have found in the

person of Sister Cecilia, a kindred soul burning with a like apostolic zeal, whose influence he always remembered as a beacon in the Church of Poland.

Father Matulaitis began to consider ever more seriously whether he should return to Kielce. Warsaw presented to him incomparably wider horizons for his activities. Here many of his schoolmates resided and did very effective work. Here he had adequate medical facilities easily available, and the priceless care of the nuns. In the big city there were so many more opportunities to labor for the salvation of souls than there were in a small town. He decided to remain in Warsaw if at all possible.

In his letter, written in Latin and dated April 5, 1905, Father Matulaitis outlined extensively and factually the state of his health and the conditions as they exist in Warsaw whereby he could hope to prolong his life. He included the reminder that because of the lack of adequate medical facilities in Kielce, he was forced to interrupt his duties in the seminary repeatedly and travel from city to city, thereby injuring his health and spending more money than he earned. Now it was impossible to even think of returning to that kind of situation and he felt compelled to ask to be released from the diocese of Kielce.

Despite these and other cogent arguments presented in a spirit of hope that his request be granted, the answer was negative. In his long reply the bishop stated that he took into consideration all the reasons alleged, but he would not grant the request. He reminded Father Matulaitis of his canonical ties to the diocese and that he could not place his personal needs above those of the diocese. The bishop added that he would not release him "until you get another priest, a replacement provided by you to serve in the diocese". In answer Father Matulaitis wrote (April 19th):

> Your Excellency, I regret that my situation is such that I cannot in any way alter my decision. Illness, even as death, makes such demands that neither emergency nor pressing need can forestall it. My illness had advanced to the stage that amputation of

my leg was indicated. I was spared that ordeal only thanks to the efforts of the best and most skillful doctors and of my benefactors.

I won't be able to find a substitute as you suggested; and in returning, my illness, as past experiences have already proved, will be agrravated to the point that I will be deprived of not only the diocese but of my very life. My conscience will not permit me to place myself in that grave situation. I again request Your Excellency to excardinate me from your diocese.

Whether or not the bishop replied to that letter is not known, but it was only his successor, Bishop Augustine Lozinski, who granted the exardination.

Past and future accomplishments clearly show that reasons of health were only secondary in the decision Father Matulaitis made to remain in Warsaw. He could not deny the demands of his very idealistic nature to seek higher goals. Action, not stagnation, was the hallmark of his life. One of the proverbs he delighted in using can be applied to him: "Ad majora natus sum."

Chapter 4

Personality and Search of Mission

Some of the aspects of Father Matulaitis' personality while recuperating from his illness were previously outlined by Eugene Jarra, the law student, who eventually became professor of jurisprudence, economics, and sociology in the University of Warsaw on its revival after World War I, and who later lectured at Oxford after World War II.

He claims that, despite his many labors and experiences during the intervening years, the deep impression Father Matulaitis made on him as a 23-year-old student remained vividly in his memory.

Upon request in 1959 by the Postulator in the process of beatification, he wrote his recollections as testimony. He began by stating that he stands behind the truth of every word, very much conscious of the oaths he had taken to promote the cause of truth as a Doctor of Laws, a judge, and a professor.

He recorded his memoirs in logical sequence and a narrative style, rather than chronologically, and thus gives a more compact characterization of the person.

Father Matulaitis resumed his intellectual labors while still confined to a sick-bed, when there was surcease from the effects of the injections, and as illness permitted. Mr. Jarra frequently found him at work when he visited. The priest often shared his ideas and would ask for comments. Mr. Jarra writes:

> Based on direct observation, I would describe his intelligence thus: Having fixed in mind some purpose or task, he would seek to investigate all possible problems connected with it and would proceed directly to fundamentals.
>
> Knowledge for him was not an end in itself, but merely a means. His aim was not merely to absorb but to utilize it. He was a man of true erudition conscientiously drawing on all possible sources for answers. He did not indulge in speculation or research for its own sake.
>
> Having in mind the purposes for which Providence had chosen him, it is fortunate that he was not intrigued by pure research which often dulls man's abilities to face life and its problems realistically. Often the person immersed exclusively in theoretical speculation is unable to manage the practical details involved in founding institutions as was this future Renovator of the Marian Fathers Order.
>
> If it is true that finding the simplest and clearest answers or solutions is the mark of a wise man, then Father Matulaitis was such in the fullest meaning of the term.
>
> Having a very agile mind, he could express his thoughts exactly and in a manner understandable to all. Words, for him, were the essence of a thought. In that sense he was an eloquent speaker. Especially alien to his speech were stilted and pretentious phrases. In general, he rejected any affectation or pretense.

Farsightedness and energy were very strong traits in Father Matulaitis' character. After his studies and work in Western Europe, his finely developed mental powers could not bear the stagnation which the cultural, religious and social life of the Poland of his day was experiencing.

Professor Jarra describes how the Catholic Church in the Congressional Kingdom, as the occupied part of Poland was then designated by the Russians, was specially persecuted and lethargic when compared to the Western Church and even to the unoccupied parts of Poland:

> In the lower echelons of the clergy the intellectual and moral level was noticeably substandard. This was evidenced when the School of Theology of the University of Warsaw was being established (1916). It was staffed by professors imported from unoccupied Poland... Apart from this individual instance, the general situation was very depressing among the populace which held to Catholic traditions and practices merely for sentimental or

patriotic reasons. The intelligentsia sank more and more into religious indifferentism. The bourgeoisie was succumbing to the wave of anti-clericalism and the enticements of socialism and heresy.

All this was seen and keenly felt by Father Matulaitis. As a result of these aberrations, the Polish people became easily disorganized in the 1904-1906 interim, when the onslaught of Russian revolutionaries engulfed them, determined to destroy whatever was or appeared to be intolerable to them.

On the other hand, to blame just the clergy individually for the religious and cultural regression would not be accurate because their personal progress and activities were as constricted by the existing political situation as were those of the Church as an institution. The brutal Russian oppression was a merciless revenge for the 1863 uprising. In great part that revenge was directed at the Polish and Lithuanian priests. Executions, imprisonment, and exile thinned out their ranks. The very best among them were eliminated.

The Russian regime threatened the very structure of the Catholic Church. Dioceses for long periods of time were deprived of bishops while the authorities searched for less competent candidates or those favorable to them. For the bishops in office they placed all kinds of obstacles to keep them from full communication with their priests. Processions and other religious functions outside the walls of the church were strictly forbidden.

Beyond this, they closed almost all Catholic convents, monasteries, schools and institutions operated under Church auspices, and confiscated all their properties. To replace the educational system which they destroyed, the Russians established their own schools in order to uproot the Catholic faith and the love of country from the hearts of the young. Even this was not enough. The government eradicated the very names of the two countries from maps. They called Poland the "Region Along the Visla," and

Lithuania the "Northwest Region." Once again, the testimony of Professor Jarra:

> Father Matulaitis discerned very clearly the backwardness of the leaders in the Church and was worried about the poverty of available religious literature. He had been appointed censor of religious books and had ample opportunity to judge the substance and worthiness of this literature, especially devotional books and pamphlets. Father Matulaitis showed me the many manuscripts and books that constantly covered his desk and shared with me his comments and critique about them. He had a deep love of and devotion to Mary, and on one occasion picked out one small pamphlet which particularly offended his intelligence and good taste. It was titled "A Litany to the Blessed Virgin Mary's Milk." He complained then of how hard it was to explain to some devout but naive authors that literature of this type demeaned religion and the Church itself.
>
> Father Matulaitis spoke occasionally and in general about the necessity for religious orders to accommodate themselves to the conditions and the needs of the changing times. He mentioned the apparel and other external appurtenances of religious life which irritated and repulsed the democratized people of the time. On these occasions neither he nor anyone else spoke of his projected personal involvement in this type of renewal.

At the end of the 19th century the armed might of Japan in the Far East began to be felt. The territories for which Russia and China vied became the object of its drive toward expansionism. This resulted in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, a very costly defeat for the Russians. In Russia that blow created deep unrest against the government, widespread labor strikes, disorders, and finally the Revolution (1905), which affected the entire country.

In Poland the winds of freedom freshened. The students became so active that the Russian authorities closed the University of Warsaw and all technical schools. In the wake of the collapse of all law enforcement, demonstrations were frequent and the socialist element emerged to declare war on capitalism and its reputed accomplice, the Church.

This was a clarion call for the Church to rise from its slumbers. The first historical step was "Rerum Novarum,"

the still famous encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the condition of the working classes. In this is found his appeal to the priests: "Quitez la sacristie" — get out of the sacristy; begin to work among the masses and help solve their social problems. According to Jarra:

> On the front lines of this offensive was Father Matulaitis. With typical deliberate energy and the enthusiastic cooperation of the countess, he organized a group of intellectuals for a political-economic seminar. Besides the organizers, the group was made up of Father Przezdziecki, a seminary professor; Count Julius Ostrowski, the leader of the conservative Catholics; two youth representatives, both law students and activists, Thaddeus Blazejewicz and Eugene Jarra; and a number of interested men and women.
>
> The choice of the lecturer was left up to me, with the provision that he would not represent the ideology of the audience, but would try to widen the horizons for all. I chose Ludwig Krzywicki. He was a prominent educator, economist, sociologist and anthropologist, and exponent of the leftist-radical views in social theory, and, politically, a social-democrat. His selection was approved and he was engaged as lecturer.
>
> The sessions took place in the spacious Przezdziecki residence, and the audience was very attentive to the learned speaker's explanations and dissections of social problems. His presentation was clear and reasoned, as befits the true scholar, avoiding extremism, bias and propaganda.
>
> Even as the other participants, Father Matulaitis also took notes. In the question and answer periods he praised the lecturer's learning and objectivity, and added that many of his statements coincided with the Catholic ethic. To express such a point of view, on the part of Father Matulaitis at that time (1905), was both progressive and courageous. The conservative Count Ostrowski was not at all hesitant to declare that, because of the project instigated by the countess and Father Matulaitis and abetted by Mr. Krzywicki, they were all headed for heresy and eternal perdition.

Further on in his memoirs, Mr. Jarra reports:

> The farsighted activities of Father Matulaitis to dispel the anomie among churchmen met with opposition and adverse criticism. Narrow obscurantists and partisans of frozen tradition attempted to prove that the center of his dangerous theories were

> the institutions run by Countess Plater, already suspect of Modernism. The chief source of the charge of Modernism was Julius Ostrowski.
>
> More than once when I was teaching his sons in 1906 he expressed his indignation and distrust. Progress was a bugbear for him and he even questioned the integrity of the Jesuits in Cracow.

The taint of Modernism was specially imputed to Father Matulaitis when he became involved in the Christian Workers movement. This created uneasiness among the representatives of Church Unity who read into his criticism of the ills of the Church a call to its destruction. He was attacked in the Polish press and even reported to Rome. All this was the work of Count Ostrowski. This commotion did not unduly disturb Father Matulaitis. To avoid controversy was one of his most prominent traits.

Whether it had any connection with the Count's allegations, it is interesting to note the judgment made by Monsignor Umberto Benigni, then the head of the secret international organization to oppose Modernism (Sodalitium Pianum), who declared that Father Matulaitis was "one of the most dangerous Modernists in the world."

On **"Litvomania"** Mr. Jarra writes:

> I put that heading in quotation marks because the term did not originate with me. I fell obliged to refer to it because it was bruited about by certain individuals and groups.

After explaining the meaning of "mania" as a word used to describe a psychic disorder manifesting itself as a single-minded obsession, he states categorically:

> I can assure you that in the period of our close friendship (1904-1906), Father Matulaitis was not and in no sense could he be any sort of litvomaniac.
>
> First of all, as a faithful member of the Catholic Church and as a man of great intelligence, Father Matulaitis knew well that the Church does not discriminate among nations, for this would be patently opposed to charity and the dictates of justice. There are, however, certain chauvinists who would deify their own nation and demean others. Because extreme nationalism is a tool of the

politician, not only did he not participate in it, but actually avoided it because litvomania or any other extremism was entirely foreign to his nature.

During the time of our close association I had not heard nor did I know any other name than Matulewicz. He always spoke Polish without idiom and with a purity of one born to it. On his part there wasn't ever even an intimation of an ethnic difference between the two of us nor did I ever detect this in his contacts with others. On the contrary, as I have previously mentioned, he was sincerely occupied with Polish affairs reacting no differently than other residents of Warsaw.

On one occasion when I visited him during his illness he spoke a few words in a foreign tongue to the maid who brought his meals. To my question about this, he calmly replied that it was Lithuanian, the language of the country the girl was from; and that he had thanked her in that language in order to please her. A "litvomaniac" would certainly have availed himself of such an opportunity for his purposes.

As I complete my memoirs of Father Matulaitis, I feel especially fortunate to have been able to contribute my little bit to the process of beatification of a priest who accomplished so much good on earth.

I am very grateful to him that in that fateful period in a young man's life when enticements and allurements can misdirect the process of maturation, I had not just his spoken word but particularly the living example of a farsighted mind and sterling character to light my way along the many years of my studies and teaching.

* * *

In the eventide of the 19th century and on the threshold of the 20th, the intelligentsia of Western Europe was thrashing about in the mists of French positivism, English evolutionism, and Marxist materialism. The one most important task of these "isms" was the "emancipation" of man from the clutches of religion: to take away his soul and his God, to deprive him of his church. The supreme authority was to be the human mind, pure reason, as the only source and criterion of truth, withdrawing the process of thinking from any influence of sense perception and feeling.

The greatest supports of the mind were to be anthropology, the natural sciences, and biology. The authority of the medical sciences was invoked to destroy the concept of the soul, the human spirit. Surgeons were quoted as never having found any such entity in the human organism. Marxism went a step further. It denied the psychic powers of man, alleging that all human attainments are to be judged in terms of production.

This gave rise to Marxist radical reforms demanding the eradication of private property as the root of all social evils, the destruction of the capitalist system and the distribution of wealth among the working classes, the proletariat. The milder form of this was called socialism.

A relentless war against religion was hidden under the guise of socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and even world revolution. The battle-cry was "Workers of the World, Unite!" Simpler tactics were offered to the unlearned: call the believer an ignoramus and the atheist a progressive, and you will be a savior of the world. It was necessary only to distribute the wealth. What was offered was the simplistic formula of revolution and the destruction of capitalism.

Much of this is recorded in the ink of many books, in hysterical explosions of world-wide propaganda, and in the blood of countless innocent human victims. Words pale into insignificance in the face of the Russian Marxist communist empire of slaves.

Western liberalism found a receptive climate in Eastern Europe. The haughty Polish gentry boasted of its enlightenment, its liberalism and prosperity; while the people were poverty-stricken, and the Church was asleep. The young people eagerly embraced the new ideology which was propagated in state schools. In Poland and Lithuania another element was added, the Russian occupation which was triggered in revenge for the uprisings of 1830 and 1863. The greater the oppression, the greater the rise of the spirit of revolt among the young. The closing of

the schools dispersed the students into small towns and villages, there to spread the cause of revolution.

The Church was backward not because there was a lack of learned and active priests, but because these were apprehended by the Russian police. Despite this, the Church remained the only force powerful enough to do battle against socialism, and to defend religion and humanity. In Poland and Lithuania the battle was more difficult because the monasteries and their schools were closed.

In Poland the Capuchin, Father Honoratus (1829-1916), tried to fill the gap by establishing the Third Order of St. Francis (Tertiaries) among the laity, and also by establishing eighteen secret religious communities. This was hardly enough.

The Church in Western Europe at the time did not lack for turmoil. It was the object of attack and criticism by the forces of liberalism and atheism. The Papal States were the special target for Risorgimento, a political move to unify Italy. Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) was stout in defense, but to little avail. It was decided to convene the ecumenical Vatican Council I (1869) to address existing conditions. Its most notable result was the decree on papal infallibility.

Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) succeeded Pius IX and found not too much reason to battle the states if their governments did not always agree with traditional norms. He stated that their political make-up was not of paramount concern. In his famous Encyclical "Rerum Novarum" (1891), he came to grips rather with needed social employer-employee relations, rights to private property, improvement of the living conditions for the poor, and strategies to combat Marxism. In place of class warfare he proposed mutual respect, fair-wage laws, social security and the spiritual welfare of the working class.

In his other Encyclical "Graves de Communi" (1901), he discussed the role of organized Christian democracy, which need not coincide with any particular political format. Its purpose, once more, was to promote proper

working and living conditions and to help the state formulate and propagate beneficial social principles.

The dawn of the Industrial Age was a mixed blessing. The numbing drudgery of manual labor was alleviated by machinery and resulted in increased production. Expanding trade and new inventions brought material prosperity. Cities sprang up in industrial centers which drew their manpower from agricultural areas. The cities became overcrowded and many of the workers lived in slum conditions. Their wages were determined by the whim of their employers. Poverty and misery were widespread.

Warsaw was no exception. It was not spared the socialist-revolutionary upheavals which were felt even within the Catholic Church.

Having experienced reverses in his own life and being intimately acquainted with the exploitation of the working poor, Father Matulaitis could not bear calmly the demagoguery of socialist agitators with their deceitful promises of sharing the wealth. He saw the unrest of the younger generation, the tension of being torn between patriotism and Marxist vengefulness. There was justifiable fear, he saw, that this could result in riots and much bloodshed.

Without hesitation he plunged into social work for which he was well qualified by his studies in Fribourg. Those years coincided with the revival movement in the West in answer to Pope Leo's call to concentrate on the social problems of the working class.

The Catholic Church in Poland began to move in this direction only in 1905 when the Czarist regime, shaken by the rumblings of rebellion, issued the Edict of Toleration in its occupied lands. Possibly at the suggestion of Father Matulaitis, the suffragan bishop of Warsaw, Casimir Ruszkiewicz (1836-1925), became director of the social programs in the diocese. With the consent of Archbishop Vincent Popiel (1825-1912), the Commission for Social-Religious Affairs was formally established October 9, 1905.

The most important initial task of this commission was

to prepare guidelines for the Church's social action. This work was delegated to Father Matulaitis and Father Przezdziecki and was completed in two months.

With the approval of the commission, the program was published anonymously in a brochure "Christian Democracy" in 1906. At that time an ecclesiastical encyclopedia was being published in Warsaw under the editorship of Father Z. Chelminski, who asked Father Matulaitis, as the expert in the commission, to write an extensive article on Catholic Action and its modes of procedure.

The opinion of Stanislaus Gajewski about how those ideas were crystallized in the mind of Father Matulaitis is worth quoting here:

> I think it was the congruence of several factors: his special studies abroad and his contacts with the secret religious orders which were already active in social work. Then of great significance was his Lithuanian origin. The Polish priests were engaged largely in affairs endemic to their nation, whereas the Lithuanian priests had the choice of joining in the budding movement among their own nationals or organizing their programs according to the spirit of papal encyclicals which were beyond the sphere of endemism. Father Matulaitis opted for the latter course. When time came to act he had already clarified his views of what was necessary for Catholic Action in his day.

Some organized social action among the workers was begun earlier. It was supervised by Monsignor Marcellus Godlewski (1865-1945), a graduate of the seminary in Seinai and the Gregorian University in Rome (1893). His degree course was in sociology. In Warsaw he was pastor of All Saints parish. Because of his first-hand knowledge of problems besetting the working class, he began organizing groups in his own parish and others in Warsaw where they discussed their needs, arranged lectures, seminars and socials. Each group had its own leaders who met with Monsignor Godlewski and occasionally with Fathers Matulaitis and Przezdziecki.

Soon Monsignor Godlewski and Father Matulaitis

became collaborators, and gathered the groups into one central organization, called "Stowarzyszenie Robotnikow Chrzescijanskich." Later, when Catholic Action was well programmed the name was changed to "Chrzescijanska Demokracja." Father Matulaitis edited its bi-weekly newspaper "Worker's Friend" which later became "Polish Workers."

After the Edict of Tolerance, conditions became a bit more livable. The organization was legalized and was able to follow its program freely. Father Matulaitis made sure that it would not be involved in politics; that it be a purely religious, cultural, patriotic, and social association of workers. This met the approval of Monsignor Godlewski.

Working in concert, the two of them were able to expand the organization to the point where there were 50,000 members. This was a large force whose suggestions and demands had to be respected, and were respected by the government and its local officials. However, after two years of successful work, Father Matulaitis had to leave for St. Petersburg to become professor at the Institute. Soon Monsignor Godlewski left also.

After their departure, the leadership fell into the hands of politicians, who used the great power of the organization to further their political machinations with little regard for the basic principles of Catholic Action. The cancer of political expediency ate away at the very structure of the organization so that at the beginning of World War I, there remained only about 5,000 members.

Somewhat later the archives of the organization were lost. Consequently, the more specific details of the activities of Father Matulaitis are lacking, but it is definitely known that he lectured extensively, wrote many popular and scholarly articles in Polish, prepared sociological seminars, established a central library of socio-economical and theological publications.

In the earlier days of the liberation movement (possibly the winter of 1905-6), about 400 priests from the various dioceses of Poland gathered in Warsaw to discuss the

problems of reform, but by whose invitation it was not clear. It was rumored that the meeting was called by a political party (Demokracja Narodowa) of extremist nationalists. The petition to clarify this was put from the floor repeatedly but no satisfactory answer was forthcoming, and a number of the priests noisily left the auditorium.

Because the ecclesiastical authorities had no knowledge of this meeting or its purposes, and since the conveners had found no need to present themselves to the local archbishop, apprehension rose that decisions and resolutions could be made which would not correspond to the principles of the Catholic Church. In this delicate situation it seemed prudent not to express any official protest but to watch and wait. To forestall any untoward results, Father Matulaitis and Monsignor Przezdziecki conferred with the archbishop and volunteered to monitor the proceedings.

While seated in different sections of the auditorium, they participated in the deliberations and discussions and supported each other discreetly. Their calm tactics and practical logic were so effective that nothing adverse came of it all. Moreover, their dignified deportment made such an impression that at the close of the meeting the presiding officers went to Archbishop Popiel, declared their obedience, presented their resolutions, thanked him and asked his blessings.

After the meeting Father Matulaitis resolved to organize the priests of Poland so that they would not be exploited by some political factions, but would concentrate on their proper pastoral duties and the enlightenment of their people. As a result of his efforts, "Unio Apostolica" was formed for this purpose in 1907.

The zealous leaders of the Christian Democratic movement, Fathers Matulaitis and Przezdziecki, planned for the plight of the disenfranchised to be recognized and responded to more widely in society. They decided to arrange a course of social studies where sociologists could

give the general public necessary theoretical and practical information.

It was planned that these courses be presented in Vilnius in 1906, but the government authorities in St. Petersburg forbade this. Then it became necessary to choose Warsaw. Under the leadership of Auxiliary Bishop Ruszkiewicz, a committee for social affairs was formed, made up of the clergy and lay-people, to prepare these courses. The task was not easy. First of all, it was necessary to find and invite competent lecturers who could present social problems from different fields and viewpoints.

Among the lecturers chosen were two professors from Jogaila University in Cracow, Vladimir Czerkowski and Karol Klecki; three priests from Poznan, Stanislaus Adamski, Peter Wawrzyniak, and Casimir Zimmermann; Fathers Matulaitis and Godlewski; and, from the laity, Stephen Godlewski, Edward Jaroszynski, Count Ladislaus Potocki and Adolf Suligowski.

The cycle of lectures covered every aspect of social life, abiding by the strong directives Father Matulaitis laid down: clearly and openly to express what was, what is, and what should be.

There was a survey of social conditions as they existed at various time intervals: marxist-socialism, collectivism, communism, capitalism. The conditions of the working class in cities and rural areas were presented graphically as were the social problems in the autonomous regions of Russia. Alcoholism as a common and universal social problem was also addressed. The speaker from Poznan related how they handled problems according to German Western Catholic systems.

Father Matulaitis chose for his theme the cornerstone of Christian sociology, the right to private property. His views were expressed openly, strongly and courageously; and some of his conclusions and judgments sometimes differed from those thought to be the Church's untouchable truths and tradition. His presentation was acknowledged by most to have been the best of the series.

Because his conclusions were based, not only on authentic Christian sources, but also on his hard-won knowledge and experience, he had the right and courage also to strike at capitalistic exploitation and pagan "use and abuse."

With this series of studies his activities came to an end in Warsaw, where he was very popular as an authority in matters Catholic and social, and where he was very active in pastoral work, organizations and the press.

He prepared to leave for St. Petersburg, the capital of Czarist Russia, where he was to teach sociology in the School of Theology at the Institute. His work once more was not to be confined to classroom and lecture hall; next year he was to participate in a sociology seminar in Kaunas.

Perhaps it was a sad parting with Warsaw where he may have found better opportunities to establish a religious order of priests. Perhaps in the eyes of the determinists it was his destiny to move to other things whenever he became deeply involved in some particular work, but in his own eyes it was a clear manifestation of Divine Providence. The soldier of Christ does not leave the field of battle at will.

* * *

The revolution of 1905 in Russia gave birth to many political and social hopes. The seemingly impregnable throne of the Czars began to sway. The Czar was forced to concede some religious and political freedoms. The Institute at St. Petersburg took advantage of this. In January of 1906, its senate decided to establish the chair of sociology. This gained the personal approval of Czar Nicholas II. However, it was hard to find a suitable professor in Russia. The German newspaper, The St. Petersburg Zeitung, in its April 15, 1906 edition contained this item:

> Catholic priests had been under special scrutiny by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The priest, found in possession of any foreign printed matter on politics or sociology, was to be arrested

and sent to a monastery. For that reason, the younger clergy had been forced to foresake social studies. Without doubt, it was now difficult to find in Russia a Catholic priest who could take such a chair at the Institute. The Rector will have to turn to priests in Germany or Austria.

Eyes turned to Warsaw. The reputation Father Matulaitis had acquired as an erudite theoretician and practitioner in social matters was the deciding factor. The Rector invited him to take the chair of sociology. The invitation was accepted and Father Matulaitis came to St. Petersburg bringing his extensive library in September 1907. Sociology as the new course and its teacher who had stirred up Poland caused a mild sensation at the Institute. Father Bucys writes:

> The formal introductory lecture (in Latin) was on the Church's teaching on private property. The lecture pleased the professors very much, but more so the students. All his lectures kept the attention of the students because of the content matter, the up-to-date treatment of problems, and the eloquence of his presentation. Personally, I did not attend any of his lectures, but living at the Institute, I noticed that the students who would occasionally skip lectures of other professors would never miss his.

In his memoirs Father Blase Cesnys (1884-1944), one of his students, wrote:

> In the autumn of 1907 the students at the Institute received some welcome news. The first professor of the newly established chair of sociology had arrived. Everything about this roused our interest. The subject itself was new and enticing. Of no lesser interest to us was its teacher, Father Matulaitis. Rumors about him reached us before his arrival and we were well disposed. Report had it that he was an exceptional theologian and a brilliant alumnus of the Institute, and, moreover, a sound sociologist, having made his mark in Warsaw with his seminars and wide experience in organizing workers.
>
> Our expectations were not in vain. The new professor charmed us immediately. He spoke the cultured language of Warsaw better than many native-born Poles. We were all impressed by the scope of his knowledge and his method of teaching, but we were truly amazed by his clarity of mind.

I had many excellent professors, but not among any of them did I find this quality to the extent that Father Matulaitis possessed it. Add to this a most gracious personality and the attractive appearance of a still youngish man and you will understand our enthusiasm.

The lecture hall became much too small to accommodate all who came to hear his lectures, and it was not unusual that those who were not scheduled to be there would bring their own chairs and sit in the adjacent corridor. Later it developed that some of the students wanted to drop their chosen courses and become sociologists.

And I admit that I myself wrestled with that same temptation. The wise professor, however, had no intention of encouraging this. On the contrary, he positively forbade it and insisted that I stay in my chosen field and remain with Professor Bucys. I remember it very clearly as he told me: 'It is too late for you, and sociology is not the only science we need today; we need theology much more. Let the younger people, such as your friend. Mr. Jurgutis, pursue this specialty.' I had approached him with my dilemma and I am not sorry for having done so. How much wisdom he showed in my case and that of my younger friend, all for the benefit of Lithuania!

Ladas Jurgutis (1885-1966) became a priest, an economics professor, a financier, and organizer of the Bank of Lithuania and its long-time director. Attorney Liudas Noreika, also a former student, gives this evaluation of Father Matulaitis:

I remember his sociology lectures as though they were today. It happens but rarely that profound knowledge could be so beautifully tied in with eloquence. He knew how to take the deepest scientific concepts and most complicated problems and explain them simply, not by resorting to complicated formulas, but by unfolding the nub of the matter layer by layer. This was a gift of God, but it also meant that the teacher had a thorough grasp of his matter.

His sociology lectures were truly a pleasure for the students. Basing himself on the social encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII, Father Matulaitis was able to look as deeply into all social problems as did that great Father and Educator of the Church. Those encyclicals for him were not dry formularies or parameters, but the prime matter of Catholic social teachings which were useful only in their development and implementation. This idea he was able to convey with great success.

A slight, pleasant smile was constantly on his lips; and this did not leave him when he wore the mitre of bishop and archbishop. A

cheerful countenance is characteristic of a cheerful soul. In his cheerfulness was reflected his holiness and great love of neighbor.

The same characteristics, scholarliness and eloquence, cheerfulness and tolerance, attracted many of the lay students to the Malta Church to hear his religious conferences. The content and mode of his preaching was such that many a doubt was dissipated in the hearts of the young people.

Even then, 1907-1910, he was widely known not only in the Lithuanian colony in St. Petersburg, but also here in Lithuania for the ardent love he had for the land of his birth; yet he was no narrow super-nationalist. His intense patriotism did not hinder his work for people of other nations. As a priest and as bishop of the Church Universal, people for him were not just Jew or Gentile.

Among his former students, whose written memorials we have, was Mecislaus Reinys (1884-1953), priest, professor in the University of Lithuania, bishop, archbishop of Vilnius, and a martyr of Russian bolshevism. He wrote:

On September 18, 1907, Professor Matulaitis gave his prefatory lecture on "what the Church teaches on the right of property." The entry in my diary for that day was put in these words: profound mind, consistency, eloquence, earnestness.

On September 28 he gave the first of his regular lectures. Our reaction was delight with this new professor. He taught in all four courses and, given the opportunity, we would attend his lectures in the other courses. He would speak deliberately, but so beautifully, sincerely, logically, and topically, that one would want to put his words immediately into print. He spoke without apparent tension, most often with his left hand somewhat extended and looking at the tips of its turned-up fingers.

His lectures not only provided food for thought, but also nourished the heart; not only did they cultivate viewpoints, but also the resolve to live and feel as those views required. And if I, personally, understand the vital need of public service, if I value it, delight in it, this was due mainly to what I gained from his sociology lectures... He taught the theoretical, but also the practical or applicable part of sociology; for example, how to conduct meetings and take a meaningful part in them. One very practical rule struck me: go to a meeting always properly prepared; study the agenda thoroughly beforehand; analyze each item and have a definite position or proposal.

Aside from his academic lectures, Professor Matulaitis shared with us some pearls of spiritual life. In Lent of 1908, he conducted

a five-day retreat for us, and throughout the year he gave weekly spiritual conferences. His spoken word was always substantial in its theology, natural ethics and learning; without vague or personal opinions.

While a seminarian at Kielce, Marjan Wisniewski was one of Father Matulaitis' students, and after ordination he came to the Institute at the same time as his erstwhile teacher. He writes:

Father Matulaitis accepted the chair of sociology with some apprehension. He explained that he had not taken that science for his major subject and did not know how to resolve what he considered a dilemma. However, when he opened his lips, ours went agape in surprise. He led us into a different world. We understood previously that he was gifted with unusual talents, but now he opened wide to his hearers hitherto unknown horizons in truly artistic fashion. The ability to synthesize is an art which he exhibited to his audience, whereby the picture of life came to a cohesive whole. I was his student for two years.

I can't forget the panoramas his words brought before our eyes: civilized, industrialized England with its poverty-stricken workers, heartless capitalistic exploitation, degradation of womanhood, child labor.

And in Russia? The worker lived in mud and on refuse heaps, and his body was of no more worth than a dishrag. Professor Matulaitis was a true man of the people, a real friend of the oppressed working man. His lectures were making us revolutionary rebels against social injustice. However, he was not content just to condemn evil. He reached for its very roots deep within human nature and taught us also the constructive avenues to reform. He didn't dally with petty differences in the stream of social thinking; he went to the very heart of the matter, as St. Thomas Aquinas would say: 'in viscera causae,' and placed before us constructive remedies for this evil.

In the question of woman's place in society, the latitude of his views on the vocation of woman and his deep knowledge of human nature truly surprised us.

He laid before us not merely academic formulas but real standpoints on life. Here and there he would slip in, almost unconsciously, one of his favorite phrases: 'Give us people.' This exhortation became the subject of a paper I prepared to share with members of our study group. For my master's degree I chose a theme very dear to the heart of our mentor: "The Role of the

Priest in Social Action." From my experiences at the Institute I became convinced that the most successful way to educate the young and to motivate them to get involved in social action was to present the truth in its starkest reality and to provide an ideal. Rules, moralizing, and even spiritual development were of themselves insufficient to be effective.

We were saddened when, after two years, Father Matulaitis relinquished the chair of sociology to Father Alexander Woycicki and replaced Professor John Cieplak as professor of dogmatic theology. The latter had been ordained suffragan bishop of Mogilev. I continued my course in sociology with Father Woycicki, but it wasn't the same. Father Woycicki had a doctorate from the University of Paris in social and political sciences, but wasn't able to match the depths and appeal of his predecessor.

In my third year I was able to join Father Matulaitis in his classes in dogmatic theology. Here he felt completely at ease. At one time he had remarked in Fribourg that it often happened in his life to be required to work in areas not particularly appealing to him. This time he felt that he was the master of his subject, and we felt that he took special delight in it. I remember that once in a touch of this euphoria he lectured for two hours "de aeternitate mundi," on the eternity of the world, in the eclectic fashion of Thomistic subtlety, but this was not his forte, and we felt let down.

For us the time was quickly approaching when we would actually be involved in the burning religious-social problems of the day, and on the other hand we became more aware of the fragility of priestly competence and zeal. Sad examples were given us of young, talented, and zealous priests who broke down spiritually when they found themselves alone and lonely in difficult circumstances. We were reminded of the Scriptural warning 'woe to the man alone.'

It was then that we would seek support in our self-improvement group where we could direct our thoughts and doubts to Professor Matulaitis for advice. He would praise us for our concern and would urge us to be further concerned, but would not give us any exact guidelines as we had expected. He would merely reply with a smile: "Think, think, even as I am still thinking." We had no way of knowing then that his thoughts and resolves were directed, at least in part, to the revival of the Marian Fathers Order which had been condemned to extinction by the Russians. Later on we were sure that his awareness of the value of community life for support in the life of a priest led him to plan this work even while still at the Institute.

I had no way of knowing what topics my fellow-students discussed in private interviews with Father Matulaitis; but for myself I was able to convey to him my resolves for the future. As I was completing my last year of study and had already received my master's degree in theology, he summoned me and happily said to me: "Here is what you are seeking," and handed me a booklet. I glanced at the cover: "Institute of the Marian Brothers under the title of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary." It had been approved by Pope Pius X in 1910. Having read the constitutions, I immediately decided to join the Order.

To conclude these testimonials brought forward in the process of beatification of the Archbishop, we add that of Monsignor Zenon Kalinowski from Kalisz written in 1967. He illustrates some of the virtues of this Servant of God:

We waited with special interest for Father Matulaitis' introductory lecture at the Institute. As I recall, it was far-sighted, logical, and very practical. It was delivered simply, methodically and without affectation. In all, his presentation was easily understood, was not weighed down by unnecessary theories, but illustrated by examples from the day, and based on the Church's social doctrines. Withal, it was permeated by the love of neighbor.

From his lectures, it was felt that a true Christian humanist was speaking to each of us. He was always cordial in his relations, treating each one graciously, and freely giving each his professional and spiritual help. In his private conversations he always found something to say to the soul. He had the uncommon ability to reach people and win them over by his personality.

I might mention here, by way of illustration, one small incident in my own life, of how he looked on the priest as a social worker. Influenced by his lectures and moved deeply by the need of more social work within the vineyard of Christ, I abandoned my studies of the natural sciences and took on sociology. Once, when visiting our individual study rooms, he found me absorbed in the textbooks of my new subject.

He looked and, smiling slightly, he spoke these unforgettable words: "Please, remember throughout your life, that the priest who chooses this way of life and wants to see good fruits in his labors, has to be well-developed in his spiritual life. The priest, as a social worker, has to be a saintly priest." I was moved by these words, though I didn't grasp at the moment their full meaning. Only later, as a priest, as I reviewed my own life and as I observed those priests who passed themselves off as social workers, was I

convinced of the deep significance of this statement in practical life. In truth, the social work of priests fails because they lack a godly spirit and a purity of intention.

His was a noble personality: interiorly recollected, beautifully controlled, and always approachable. Despite constant physical pain, he was always composed and had an unfeigned smile for all. He was very obliging no matter what demands we placed on him and his time. The perfection of his priestly life and his relationships with people were marked by Christian charity, of which he would frequently remind us in his lectures and conversations. This was the example, the ideal, he gave us in our formation for social service. Although a Lithuanian by birth, he was imbued with Polish culture. In matters of nationality he was noted for being truthful and unbiased. He was truly respected and esteemed, and it is impossible not to admire him and see in him St. Paul's Man of God. A number of students were grateful to him for the spiritual direction which strengthened them to choose the priesthood and religious life. Among these, my colleagues Fathers Marjan Wisniewski and Fabian Abrantowicz, were his true spiritual sons.

* * *

Father Matulaitis was not only a university professor; he was also a preacher, retreat master, confessor, and an expert in the guidance of souls. His reservoir was never exhausted. His knowledge of life and human nature was beyond compare. He had experienced the hardships of early orphanhood and menial farm labor, the plain fare of the working man, relentless physical pain, the long drudgery of school work, and he had risen to intellectual heights. His basic tool was the spoken word; he was a speaker, not a writer.

His sermons were always fitted to his audience. He disdained highly stylized abstractions. He had the gift of expressing the most abstruse ideas in simple language understandable to all. He had a strong voice and enjoyed speaking to large crowds, and admitted that officious language did not become him. In St. Petersburg he gave a large number of sermons in the pro-cathedral and in St.

Catherine's church. In that city there were at least fifty priests of exceptional talent chosen by their bishops to study there, among whom there were a number of renowned preachers; but it was commonly accepted that Father Matulaitis surpassed them all.

Father Anthony Petrauskas (1881-1944), a vicar in the parish of Mariampole and later a Marian priest, heard the sermon given to high-school students at the beginning of their school year in 1908. He recalls that it was delivered not as by an orator, but as by a father to his beloved children. He spoke of things often heard from their parents and teachers and well known to them. The students listened with such rapt attention that absolute silence prevailed in the church. The calm pleasant voice, flowing from the heart, enraptured his young listeners:

> My dear young people, take a look at least occasionally at the bright shining buttons on your coats, and see in them the glistening tears your parents shed for your welfare. Perhaps your father is wearing a shabby, patched coat so that you might have better clothing. Perhaps he had to deny himself more than one morsel of his meager food that you may be better fed.

This small quote indicates the tone of his sermon which caused the more sensitive of them to wipe away, shyly and surreptitiously, the tears it brought on. This was the appealing force of his sermons, his fatherly heart and his word of purest truth!

When the priests of the Samogitian diocese gathered in the bishop's residence for the customary exchange of New Year's greetings in 1911, Father Olsauskas took the opportunity to suggest that a retreat somewhat out of the ordinary be planned for that summer. He suggested that one of the Lithuanian professors at the Institute be invited to conduct it. Bishop Cirtautas readily agreed and invited Father Matulaitis.

Because the diocese was so large, the retreatants were divided into two groups, one for June 21-25, the other for July 5-9.

From among the junior and senior clergy more than eighty Lithuanian and Polish priests signed up for the first one. They all knew Lithuanian, so it was conducted in that language, except for Latin morning and evening devotions. This was a first, because previously the conferences of such retreats had always been conducted in Polish. This same order prevailed for the second group. The priests were very pleased, as was the bishop.

One of the retreatants, Father George Tilvytis (1880-1931), left this verbatim report of the first conference by Father Matulaitis:

> Come aside to a place apart, and rest!... The priest especially in these days has so much work and so many worries. He is obligated to so many for so many different things... Every parishioner feels he has the right to expect of his priest that he fulfill his duties to educate, sacrifice; and, above all act for his people.
>
> Meanwhile, the priest in the parish is neglected much more than his parishioners. These are given sermons, reminders of their duties, while the priest has none of this. Even when he confesses to his brother-priest he gets hardly a word of advice; no one dares to give him a word of warning or instruction because he himself is versed in these matters.
>
> You have labored in your parishes for a whole year, my dear brothers, now for a few days be good to yourselves. Leave your parishes to the providence of God. Nothing can go wrong there for these days. Put every such worry out of your minds; God will provide. Turn your eyes only to God and your personal needs..

As he was speaking, Tilvytis writes, we felt immediately that these were the words of our loving Heavenly Father. We all felt deeply moved, and as I raised my head I saw the bishop wipe away a tear. Monsignor Dambrauskas also wrote of this retreat:

> To tell the truth, this retreat should be called a course in ascetics, rather than the accustomed series of digests of spiritual literature. The retreat master gave much more than a rehash of what he had read; he spoke the living word vibrating in his own soul. He preached four conferences a day and assisted twice daily in the examination of conscience, and here too we felt the living word.

> The priests were truly astonished at the clarity, substantiveness, and vivacity of the talks; and with the purity of language.
>
> This first retreat in Lithuanian made an impression, not only because it was spiritually uplifting and fruitful, but also because it demonstrated that the Lithuanian language could be used in preaching the word of God without the admixture of any polonisms. This is an important beginning!

Bishop Anthony Karosas (1856-1947) of the Seinai diocese followed the precedent set by Bishop Cirtautas. He arranged to have Father Matulaitis give a retreat in Lithuanian to the priests of his diocese at Mariampole in July of 1914, just before the start of World War I. Heretofore, these retreats, too, had been conducted in Polish.

Chapter 5

Revival of The Marian Order

In the history of European learning, culture, and education, the role played by the religious orders is outstanding. Their schools for fourteen centuries produced gifted and sometimes famous people in all phases of life. There were teachers, scientists and inventors, and bold navigators who challenged the oceans and used their unknown pathways to discover new continents. As in the other countries of Europe, centers of learning thrived in the monasteries of Lithuania. Latin as the universal language of learning and culture was the language of the schools in Catholic Europe, but nowhere among them was the language of the people and their national affairs ignored or demeaned. In time the local tongues were used officially in these centers of learning.

In 18th century Europe the spirit of positivism and pragmatism ate away at religion and the monasteries. The first of these to fall were the Jesuits who were suppressed by Pope Clement XIV in 1773 because of inexorable political pressure.

This was an inviting precedent for Russia which occupied all of Lithuania and a great part of Poland after the 1795 partition. Always averse to Western European culture, it soon began a campaign of annihilation against Catholic monasteries and religious orders. In Lithuania it struck a double blow by closing the monasteries and suppressing the Lithuanian press. A cultural gloom enveloped Lithuania for forty years from 1864 to 1904. The

printed word in that country was smuggled in as contraband.

Father Matulaitis grew up in that environment. During his school years and during his career in teaching and social service he learned well the power of organization and the desperate need of a monastic priesthood. He was already a monk at heart and sought ways and means to establish a religious order of priests. Somehow his eye always turned to the Marian Fathers Order.

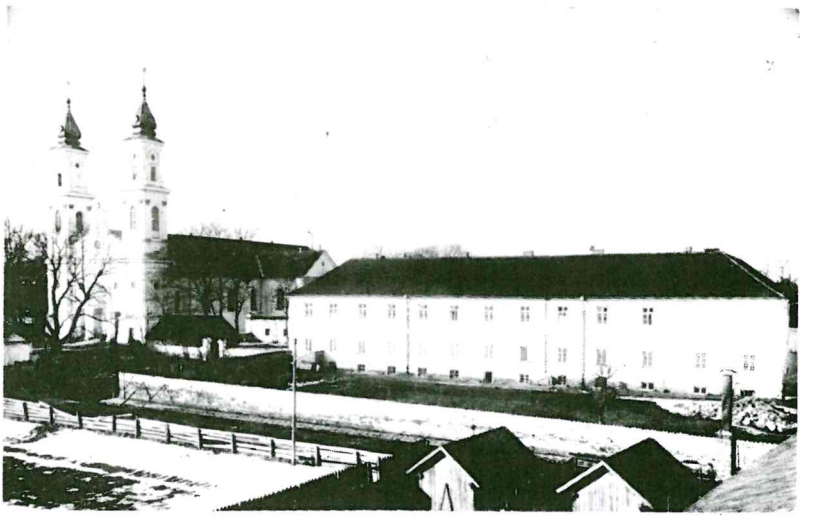
He remembered its long history which went back to the 17th century. Its founder had been Father Stanislaus Papczynski (1631-1701), who established the nucleus of the order in the diocese of Poznan, Poland. It was approved by the bishop in 1673 and received Papal approbation from the Holy See in 1699. Under the title of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, it was for a time under the guardianship of the Franciscans and became autonomous in 1787 when Pope Pius VI granted special privileges.

The monastic rule was very severe: prayers in common at various times of the day and night, fasts, strict silences and discipline. The life was mostly contemplative with an emphasis on devotion to Mary and succor for the souls in Purgatory. The Marians wore white habits; the profession of solemn vows was elaborate and public. When their numbers grew they assisted the priests of the neighboring parishes and established their houses in rural towns rather than the big cities.

They arrived in Lithuania in 1750 and established a monastery in Suduva-Suvalkai near the Sesupe river, a location that was given the formal name of "Mariampole." Soon they spread throughout the country. The seminaries for their own members were at Mariampole and Miroslavas where they were taught philosophy and theology. The order flourished until the Russian edict of 1864 when the death sentence for all Catholic religious orders was pronounced. The activities of the Marian Fathers at the time were mostly pastoral among the various parishes of

the country. There were four larger monasteries in Poland and four in Lithuania with the largest at Mariampole. In their campaign to extirpate Catholic religious orders, the Russians rounded up the Marian Fathers, exiled a number of them to Siberia, banished others to the more distant reaches of Russia, allowed some to remain in parishes, and confined all the rest in the monastery at Mariampole. These were put under the supervision of the Bishop of Seinai and kept under tight control by the Russian authorities. It was forbidden to accept new candidates and in this way the Marian Fathers Order was meant to die out.

Forty Marian Fathers were confined at Mariampole and there was hardly enough room for them. Most had no specific duties, and the Poles among them were the first to ask to be released. Some contended that they did not know the Lithuanian language and would be more useful in Poland. Others gave reasons of health or the need to support their aging parents as excuses. After repeated attempts and much correspondence with the bishop of Seinai and the Russian authorities, they started to leave



Marian Church and Monastery in Mariampole

one by one. Some of the Lithuanians also moved into parishes.

The highest superior of the order was called "General," a title which displeased the Russians who forbade its use, but the people could not be persuaded to desist in using the traditional appellation. In 1865 Father George Cesna (1835-1892) was elected superior of the Order, and on his death Father Vincent Senkus (1840-1911) was elected to succeed him. Death took its toll of the remnants of the order and in 1908 Father Senkus was the one and only Marian Father left alive.

The death throes of the Marian Fathers Order were well know to Father Matulaitis. The student-priests at Fribourg frequently discussed the Order's fate among themselves. One of them, particularly affected by the situation, was Father Casimir Matulaitis (1868-1944) who had wanted to join the Order as a deacon and could not get permission from the Russian officials. He had even appealed directly to the governor-general, but had received a negative answer. The first site of his priestly work after ordination had been Mariampole where he saw at first hand how the Marian Fathers were dwindling. In their discussions he was able to describe this in detail, and strengthened their conviction that the demise of the Order was most disastrous to the Church. There seemed to be no practical solution. "Neither could we, the future Marian Fathers, Matulaitis, Totoraitis and Bucys, contribute anything concrete."

Later, Father Matulaitis became acquainted with Capuchin Father Honoratus Kozminski, who resided in Nowe Miasto, Poland. Under the guise of forming groups of Franciscan Tertiaries, this monk was able to establish secret religious institutes, especially for women. Just how the acquaintanceship came about is not clearly known, but some of their correspondence indicates that it became a rather close friendship. In his letter of January 1904, Father Matulaitis thanks him for Christmas wafers and New Year's greetings. He regrets not having written sooner, but

expects soon to see him personally in Nowe Miasto about some very important matters.

In that letter he states that he finds it impossible to remain in Kielce and that he would like to go to Warsaw or somewhere else. The greater part of the letter contained the critique requested by Father Honoratus of a paper the latter had prepared for publishing on the love of God for mankind. Father George's comments were positive and constructive, with the suggestion that it be updated to meet existing conditions.

The letter of December 1904 details his long and serious illness and contains an account of his spiritual life: what he is reading, that he is making retreats, reviewing the mistakes in his life, forming resolutions to serve God more faithfully, and requesting his prayers.

It becomes evident from the letter of April 28, 1905, written from the school which Countess Plater had founded in Warsaw, that he was heading the secret "Association of Secular Priests for Mary," which Father Honoratus had founded in 1892. It is not clear whether or not there were other branches of this group in Poland, but the one in Warsaw was foundering because of the leader's health and other adverse circumstances. Father Matulaitis expresses worry that it will fail, and regrets that so much depends on his weak person. He promises to put everything in order, so that in case of an emergency, the association could survive without him. There were nine members in the group, four in Warsaw and the others elsewhere. There might have been more, he writes, but some are wavering and others are too timid or have reservations, and hence are afraid to join; and some could not be accepted after further testing, for not quantity was involved, but quality. He reports that they meet for two hours each Thursday evening and that their agenda includes the study of the evangelical counsels and their implementation, e.g., poverty, the distribution of one's surplus, etc.

Among the hardships, Father Matulaitis mentions the opposition of the zealots among the priests who had

become "mariavites," a sect later condemned by the Church. Its foundress was Frances Kozlowski and her followers became known also as "kozlovites." She claimed that she had received private visions in which she was directed to found a society of devout priests for special devotion to Mary and the Blessed Sacrament. After investigation by Rome, her "visions" were declared hallucinations and the sect was condemned by the Holy See. When some of the kozlovites remained incalcitrant, they were excommunicated in 1906.

Father Matulaitis complained that the very existence of such a faction, its make-up, and its final disposition compromised the very idea of the priestly association he was fostering. The kozlovites' claimed purposes were so close to those of the priestly association that it was imprudent to publicize the activities of this little group for fear that the Church authorities would disband it and that he himself would not be allowed to remain in Warsaw for needed medical treatment. Therefore, secrecy and silence were indicated.

The possible imprudence of youth forestalled the acceptance of younger clerics, and it was impossible even to mention the association to older priests who were terrified by all kinds of "heresies." In fact, some of the members of the group were already accused of being "kozlovites." In his words, "It is sad that the devil can disguise himself as light in order to frustrate virtue."

Because of these circumstances Father Matulaitis suggested to the association that another name be taken, e.g., "Association of Priest Adorers," because "Association for Mary" had been compromised by the sect. Groups of Priest Adorers were functioning abroad and the title was general enough to avoid any connection with the sect; or even "Priest Tertiaries" could be used, implying a religious order with novitiate and vows.

In spite of the handicaps, Father Matulaitis did not lose hope. He asked Father Honoratus for prayers that some kind of community action become possible, for it had

become evident that priests individually could not or were not inclined to handle the special problems of the day. He wrote:

> In view of the increasing unrest caused by socialism and the lack of effectiveness on the part of the priests to lead the people, it is necessary for us to be organized. I want, with all my heart, to devote myself to this. It is imperative that we be united in mind, that we take action, and above all, that we seek perfection.

Although the Association was short-lived, it bore fruit. Two of its members, Fathers Casimir Bronikowski and Vladimir Jakowski, later joined the Marian Fathers. This Order, now dying, inexorably drew the attention of Father

Superior General Father Vincent Senkus, last of the White Marians

Bishop Casimir Ruszkiewicz

Matulaitis more and more as the answer to his plans and desires for God and Church. To make a reality of his convictions, Father Matulaitis made a definite commitment to become a Marian Father and secretly to revive the Order.

When he became a professor at the Institute in St. Petersburg he took advantage of the more favorable conditions there. Father Francis Bucys, a close friend since their days in Fribourg and a fellow-professor, was a priest of like idealism. Their mutual plans clarified a number of steps to be taken. In the summer of 1908 they went to Mariampole to consult with Father Senkus, the last of the

White Marian Fathers. It was a delight to this "general without an army" that two such outstanding men were interested in the future of his Order. The three of them took into consideration everything necessary for revival and became even more convinced that it should be attempted.

The preliminary steps were left to Father Matulaitis. After a year's hard work he left for Rome in the summer of 1909, carrying with him the recommendation of Bishop Ruszkiewicz and the delegation of Father Senkus to act in his name.

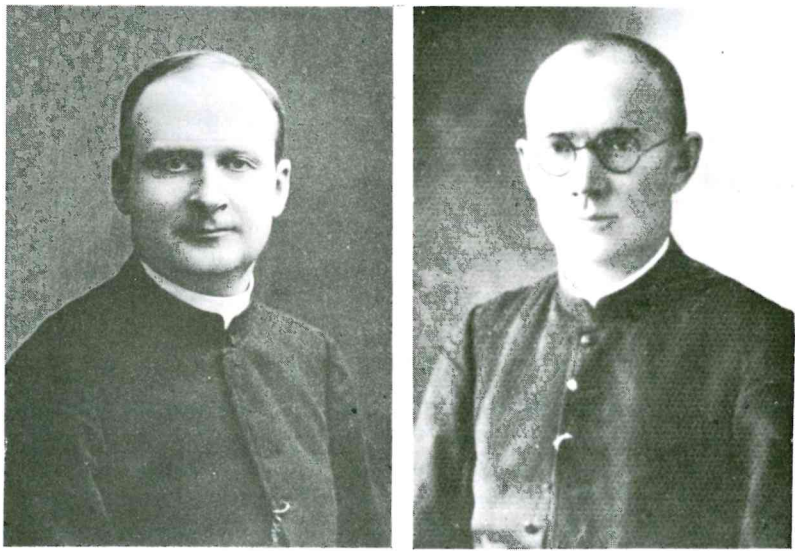
There he presented his project to the prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, the Capuchin Cardinal Vives y Tuto, who discussed it with Cardinal De Lai. The two of them took the matter to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val. Agreeing to its worthiness, they called in Father Matulaitis and quizzed him closely on every aspect. In him they found a man of extraordinary determination, learning, and holy zeal. They were cooperative, agreed to his plans, gave some practical suggestions, and obtained a private audience with Pope Pius X who also praised and agreed to the project. A preliminary affirmative decree was issued by the Congregation for Religious (No. 3544) on August 2, 1909. In it the Archbishop of Warsaw was authorized to receive the vows of the candidates which is to be witnessed by the Superior General of the Order. It was also stipulated that after at least three months the petitioners make recourse again to the Holy See with recommendations from the bishops of Mogilev, Warsaw and Seinai.

Everything transpired expeditiously, as though by the very finger of God. After fervent prayers of thanksgiving in the various basilicas, and full of enthusiasm, Father Matulaitis left Rome and hurried to present the documents to Bishop Ruszkiewicz in Warsaw. On the way he stopped to pray in the chapel of the countess's institution where his life was saved and where the basic plans for Catholic Action were born.

Father Senkus in Mariampole was immediately informed by letter that the proceedings in Rome had been completed and that he should come to Warsaw on August 26-27, to wind up certain formalities at this end. Father Bucys was also informed of this.

Plans are plans, but the time had come to take action. In preparation for pronouncing religious vows, Father Matulaitis made a retreat. The formal reception took place on August 29, 1909 in Bishop Ruszkiewicz's chapel where Father Senkus, as Superior General of the Order, received his first vows and also accepted Father Bucys as novice. After the ceremony, the official documents of reception were signed by Fathers Senkus, Matulaitis, and Bucys. A codicil subscribed by Bishop Ruszkiewicz testified that all the provisions required by the Holy See had been fulfilled.

The occasion was of prophetic significance that the Order would perdure. Due to its new nature of a secret order and to express its present aims, it was necessary to revise the constitution. Fathers Matulaitis and Bucys



Father Francis Bucys, first novice of reformed Order and Father John Totoraitis, second novice

completed this and took it to Father Senkus in Mariampole. The old man read the new constitution and sadly remarked, "There is so little left of the old Order," but accepted it. It was titled: Institutum Fratrum Marianorum sub titulo Immaculatae Conceptionis Beatissimae Virginis Mariae. It was printed clandestinely in St. Petersburg in February 1910.

The new constitution, along with the recommendations of Archbishop Apollinarus Wnukowski of Mogilev, Suffragan Bishop Casimir Ruszkiewicz of Warsaw, Monsignor Joseph Antanavicius for Seinai, and the petitions of Father Senkus for its approval was ready. The Sacred Congregation for Religious had also requested a copy of the older constitution and rule, to which Father Matulaitis added a short history of the Order and sent these with other correspondence to Rome in May 1910. After some minor revisions in the new constitution, the Congregation for Religious presented it to Pope Pius X who approved the constitution and the newly reformed Order. The decree of approbation by the Congregation of Religious was issued November 28, 1910.

The Renovator envisioned extensive and profound reforms to give new life to the Order and to open horizons of activity to suit modern needs. The older orders were cloistered, shunning the world and seeking mainly the salvation of the professed. The principal aims Father Matulaitis had in mind were diametrically opposite: to go out among the people, to seek them out in the factories, in the turmoil of the cities, in the slums; to invade the sacrosanct halls of learning. Apostolicity was to be the main preoccupation of the religious: to carry Christ's message of charity; to search out those in need of it, and not merely to wait for those who might come to them.

The renewed Order prepared to go out into the world; but because all religious orders in the Russian Empire were hounded and persecuted, it was necessary to go underground. The first matter of business was to change outward

appearances. The distinctive white habit of the Marian Fathers had to be abandoned along with public ceremonies of solemn profession. The new Marian Fathers were to wear the garb of the secular clergy; the brothers in the Order were to dress as laymen.

St. Pius X in 1910 approved reformed Marian Congregation

The religious is not constituted as such by the habit, but by voluntary selfless sacrifice and a strong desire to serve God in his earthly kingdom, the Church. He obligates himself to this lofty service by the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience. The vows and the dedication make up the essence of his vocation.

> Imbued with the spirit of Christ, we must strive to gather and organize people of good will; educate them and prepare them, that with them and through them we might bring Christ into all places; to renew all in Christ; to suffer all for His sake; to draw all to Christ.

Thus Father Matulaitis wrote in his diary for October 15, 1910. The first entry in his spiritual diary was made on Friday, October 14, 1910. Its very first words are:

> May my motto of life be: to seek God in all things, to do all for the greater glory of God; to instill all with the Spirit of God; to accept all in that same spirit. May God and his glory be the center of my life; the axis about which would revolve all my thoughts, feelings, desires, and labors.

The whole of the diary reflects the genius of his life: dedication, prayer, determination; an unvaryingly down-to-earth practicality in all he did or planned to make the Kingdom of God more livable. The general outlines are to be found there for the constitution he authored.

In the reformed Order's constitution it is stated that its purpose was to labor for the salvation and sanctification of others. To best achieve this purpose, the members themselves, priests and brothers, were to seek higher education and teach others. Schools of various kinds were to be established and manned; the printed word was to be published and disseminated; conferences and lectures were to be arranged; institutions for the needy were to be maintained. The priests of the Order were to assist the secular clergy in parishes and, if need be, to become pastors; and also to be missionaries in Catholic and non-Catholic lands.

The brothers were to be prepared for service, not just

in the monastery, but also among the people. The brothers should, in their various fields, be equal to and even excel laymen, but above all strive for perfection in their spiritual life.

In parish and organizational work, lay-people, men and women, should be enlisted not just as members but also as leaders and animators. In areas where the priest could not be effective they would be of much help.

In the milieu of each generation, living conditions are fluid and subject to change; therefore, the members were not to be involved exclusively in any one field. As humanity advances, so too should their activities keep pace to provide spiritual nourishment and to address what is most important at the time.

In the diary are found words of encouragement: the road to these goals is diffcicult, but as long as the glory of God and the good of the Church are constantly kept in mind, there is no need to fear. The Order presently has to conceal itself from the government, but it harbors no untoward ill-will toward it, it has no intention to overthrow it by force; it is not involved directly with any political or national party. The Order wants only to seek perfection in the spirit of the Gospels.

Through his customary manner of studying in depth every aspect of life as it touched him, Father Matulaitis had become an expert in the nature and history of religious life in the Church through the centuries. The Polish Ecclesiastical Encyclopedia (Vol. 43-44) contained his long article in which he describes the larger and smaller Catholic religious communities, their make-up and their modus vivendi. This knowledge of the essentials on community life dictated the revisions in the constitution of the Marian community where the contemplative life gave way to apostolic ministry.

For example, in earlier religious communities for men there had been two distinct categories of members: choir-monks, priests and candidates for the priesthood who had the obligation of reciting the Divine Office in choir; and

lay-brothers who were assigned to manual occupations for maintaining the monastery. Similarly, nuns were categorised as choir-sisters; and lay-sisters whose duties were domestic service.

The 1910 constitution abolished such distinctions, where Father Matulaitis wrote:

> All members of the religious community make up just one category and live by one common rule. They differ from each other only by their vocation and routine duties.

When in 1917, the Church's new Code of Canon Law was introduced whereby the religious were divided into various categories, the Marian Order retained its apostolic character, but had to join by law the ranks of the so-called Clerics Regular whose lay members did not have the right to vote or take office. Thus, there was a return to the titular name as it had been before the reform of 1910.

The pressures of many activities and concerns delayed Father Matulaitis in again revising the constitution to comply with the new Codex, and he completed this in the interval between 1922 and 1925. He was already the Bishop of Vilnius when this was done and it contained fuller explanations of the aims of his congregation. This revision was approved by Pope Pius XI on January 27, 1930, on the third anniversary of the Archbishop's death.

Slightly more than fifty years elapsed between the revised constitution of the Marian Fathers (1910) and Vatican Council II (1962-5), whose "Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of the Religious Life" reflects the ideas of Father Matulaitis. There (No. 15) this declaration is found:

> According to the norms of their constitutions, monasteries and communities of men which are not exclusively lay in character can admit both clergy and laity on the same basis and with equal rights and duties, excepting those which result from ordination. (Perfectae Caritatis).

The fact is that the Holy See allows brothers not only to elect but also to be elected to various administrative

offices, excepting those of Superior General, provincial, superior of a house, and novice master, who must be priests.

It would appear that the Commission of the Vatican Council to formulate the decree on religious life used ideas already expressed by Father Matulaitis in 1910. These ideas formulated at the beginning of this century were prophetic.

* * *

The necessary formalities of renewal were completed in Warsaw and Fathers Matulaitis and Bucys returned to St. Petersburg to resume their customary duties. The former applied himself to his duties as professor and also to the work of revising the constitution of the Congregation; the latter resumed teaching and continued his novitiate while residing in his quarters. A student of the University of St. Petersburg, Constantine Sungaila, also entered the novitiate, but left after a time. Two young Lithuanians, George Kosys and Mr. Pestininkas, asked to be received and were officially assigned to care for the needs of the two professors.

In the summer of 1910 the Marian Fathers rented a villa from Count Plater at his summer residence in Pohulanka. There they prepared a chapel where on Sundays the local Catholics and vacationers could attend Mass, and where on weekdays the Fathers fulfilled their community religious exercises. The garden was frequently the site for their spiritual reading and conferences. Fathers Anthony Civinskas and Pius Andziulis were vacationing there and took the opportunity to investigate and determine whether they wanted to join the Congregation.

On November 7, 1910 Father Matulaitis wrote a letter to his close friend, Father Alexander Fajecki (1881-1944), a long-time worker in the diocesan chancery of Warsaw. He shared the outcome of his recent endeavors and plans and also thanked him for his services to the nuns in Warsaw. In the letter he emphasized that Catholics should focus on

religious communities as depositories and sources of aid and cooperation in their various endeavors. He wrote further:

> I pray a great deal because I see that all my hopes are to be found only in God. In Him only is our help. As I look around I am very sad at times. However, even this brings me closer to God. I feel within my soul a remarkable serenity. It seems that my faith is being strengthened and that I am possessed by an even greater desire to sacrifice all for the greater glory of God and the good of the Church.

During the Christmas holidays he paid Father Fajecki the visit he had promised and renewed contacts with his many friends in Warsaw, and also stopped in for a visit at the Countess' school where he felt very much at home.

On his return to St. Petersburg, Father Matulaitis experienced an unawaited surprise. Without any inkling or consultation, he had been appointed Vice-Rector of the Institute. The notice of this had already been sent to the Religion Department and there seemed nothing else to do but accept the fait accompli. He made it clear, however, that he would be able to remain at the Institute only until the summer vacation. He wrote to Father Fajecki:

> This additional job will take much of my time and will interfere with my work on the constitution, but I will have to accept it as the will of God. The greater the difficulties, the more clearly I hear the voice of God within, that the hour is coming when I shall have to leave all this and devote myself entirely to the matter I promised God.

Father Wisniewski reports:

> As Vice-Rector he was also the prefect of discipline. His way was the soft word, the look and smile, instead of the sharp command. The students obeyed and respected him because this was so different from the manner of previous prefects who were loathe to trust them, would spy, and order them to keep a night-light burning in their dormitory, etc. At their age, the students considered this an affront. There was none of this with Father Matulaitis... and the lights were extinguished.

Except for Bishop Denisewicz, Administrator of the Archdiocese of Mogilev, no one knew that the revived

Marian Congregation was secreted within the walls of the Institute. But it was not long before the increased activities of the Czarist spies made it difficult to conceal anything of this nature in St. Petersburg.

On August 17, 1911 Father Matulaitis makes this entry in his diary:

> Before we started to organize, the civil authorities had relaxed some of the pressures on the religious life of the Catholics in St. Petersburg. However, when we started to implement our plans, they started to hound us, to make raids and search for secret organizations, Jesuits and others. Even the priests with me began to charge that nothing will be accomplished under these conditions... It was necessary to hide or destroy insignificant things such as scraps of paper in order not to involve others needlessly or incriminate ourselves.

The Superior General of the Marian Fathers Order, Father Vincent Senkus, died in Mariampole on April 10, 1911. The people mourned deeply because they loved their "White Father." They were also saddened because the last of the Marian Fathers left them. They knew nothing of the revival of the Order. The funeral took place on Wednesday of Holy Week and an immense crowd attended. The sermon and other encomiums were delivered by Fathers Bucys, Pius Andziulis, and the vicar of the parish, Matthias Gustaitis. The Russian authorities did not mourn this event, but the faithful were saddened because they felt that the Marian Fathers Order was buried along with Father Senkus.

In his will, Father Senkus bequeathed 6,000 rubles to Father Matulaitis as though in repayment of a personal debt. In reality, it was the property of the Order which Father Senkus left to his successors. The Russians did not honor this will.

The death of Father Senkus left only two professed Marian priests. It was necessary to postpone the election of a new superior until Father John Totoraitis had completed his novitiate in St. Petersburg.

During the summer vacation the two professors and

Father George at Friburg 1911-1914

Father Totoraitis went to Gelgaudiskis where Professor Bucys' uncle and namesake Father Francis Bucys was pastor. Gelgaudiskis was a small town on the left bank of the Nemunas river in the diocese of Seinai. The pastor was very glad to have these guests. After visiting for a while and a pleasant evening meal, they all went to the church to pray. The pastor left his guests, who seemed inclined to pray longer, and went about his business.

The visitors then went to the sacristy where Father Totoraitis made his confession to Father Matulaitis and immediately professed his religious vows. With this there were three members of the renovated Order who could rightfully elect a Superior General. Father Bucys proposed Father Matulaitis for the office and Father Totoraitis seconded the motion. Thus, in a ceremony that lasted barely ten minutes, and in the first, unusual, and secret

General Chapter of the reformed Marian Fathers Order, Father George Matulaitis became Superior General on July 14, 1911. The participants were so discreet that even the pastor was not aware of this historic event.

It was almost unthinkable that the novitiate of the order could exist and thrive safely in St. Petersburg, so it was decided to transfer it to Fribourg, a locale very well known to the three members of the Chapter. The choice was ideal. There was the University, a number of other schools, and the welcome freedom of Switzerland. At the end of July, Father Matulaitis went to Fribourg to investigate the possibilities of being established there and to find a suitable house for the novitiate.

On his return, he resigned from his duties as professor and Vice-Rector at the Institute and left for Switzerland in the middle of August. Professor Bucys succeeded him as Vice-Rector. Without knowing all the circumstances, the friends and fellow-professors of Father Matulaitis could not understand why he would give up a position where it was practically assured that he eventually would become Rector and even a bishop. They did not know that in his mind the vision of the future religious Order far outweighed any titles or honors.

It was not too long before a group of priests and laymen entered the novitiate. Among them were two professors from the Seinai seminary, Vice-Rector Father Vincent Dvaranauskas and Father Joseph Vaitkevicius. The group was made up of Lithuanians and Poles.

Chapter 6

Spiritual Diary

People keep diaries for at least two reasons. In some cases, it is a running account of people, places, and events. This is especially true of people in responsible positions who have to keep an account in order to remember accurately the sequence of events and the people involved. An occasional comment, impression, or a modus operandi is included. This kind of diary would be almost purely external documentation which serves the needs of history admirably.

Another kind is a personal one, somewhat like a conversation with one's self as though the diary were a mirror. Ordinarily it is written only for one's self; it is private and reflects the person's situation, state of health, moods, thoughts, experiences and resolutions. It could be called a spiritual diary.

Father Matulaitis started a diary on October 14, 1910. With sporadic interruptions it was kept until February 23, 1914. Most of the entries were made in October and November of the first year. These totalled nineteen. Later the intervals between entries are longer. There were six in January 1911 and four in March. In all there were eighteen that year. In 1912 there were only two: February 12 and 18. In 1913 there were six in January, two in February, three in April. In 1914 there was only one, February 23. The interruptions indicated that the author was so loaded down with work that he could not find time to jot down notes.

This diary was discovered after the death of Archbishop Matulaitis. After several years it was re-written by typewriter, possibly in preparation for printing. This copy of the diary was brought to Rome by a cleric who escaped from Lithuania and it is now in the Order's archives. Part of the diary saw print for the first time in the book, "Archbishop George Matulaitis," published in Mariampole in 1933.

The Lithuanian language of the diary is correct in grammar and rich in vocabulary. There are some instances of regional dialect and abbreviations, and also a number of his favorite Latin quotations.

The full diary was published for the first time only in 1935 in London under the title "Notes." The editor was Father Casimir Matulaitis who supplied headings for the 63 chapters and included in the book excerpts from 54 letters which were written by Father George Matulaitis for various reasons to Marian priests and candidates. The appendix contains a lengthy article by Father Joseph Vaisnora on "Archbishop George Matulaitis in Vilnius."

Translations of the diary were made into Latin, Italian, Polish and English. The Polish translation was made by Father Casimir Oksiutowicz and was published in Rome in 1973. In it the text was subdivided into smaller chapters to give clearer emphasis to the various themes which were indexed for easier reading and reference. The introduction was written by Brother Thaddeus Gorski. In addition, the book contains a short biography of the Archbishop and an account of his journey from Fribourg to Rome in 1911.

The English translation was made from the Italian text (1963) of Monsignor Vincenzo Cusumano. The English version, "In the Service of the Church," was printed and published in Chicago in 1974.

Apart from the diary a number of memoirs with overtones of autobiography still exist. The largest of these, dated from November 14 to 25 in 1911, is an account of his trip to Rome from Switzerland in the interests of the Institute in St. Petersburg, the Marian Order, and general

ecclesial matters. A much shorter fragmentary account concerns his tenure as Bishop of Vilnius and is dated March 1918 to December 1919 and February 19 to April 2, 1921. The last of the available memoranda are dated August 5 to 30, 1925.

The title given the diary by the author was: "Thoughts, Insights, Inspirations, Promises." It begins on October 14, 1910, with an expression of his ideal:

> I propose as my life's motto: to seek God in all things; to do all for the greater glory of God; to instill all with the Spirit of God; and to pervade all in that Spirit. May God and His glory be the center of my life, the axis of all my thoughts, feelings, desires and works. The glory of God and the salvation of souls! Can there be a loftier purpose? How everything pales into insignificance compared to this! Of what worth are even the best and most beautiful of human endeavors compared to this end? Therefore, isn't it worthwhile, isn't it true, that we must devote everything, our existence, all we possess, talents and wealth, and even life itself to achieve this end?

How breathtaking that initial entry! How lofty the ideal proposed, as though it were only a dream, a momentary mood of inspiration, a beautiful phrase, poetry, a surge of enthusiasm; all to fade in time. As future events proved, it was a straightforward, heroic expression of life's purpose, which was to be pursued with heart aflame and a steely, tempered will. It was as real and as work-a-day as the rising and the setting of the sun.

Father Matulaitis had already made religious vows and was involved in the practical details of renewing the Marian Congregation when he started his diary. Consequently, further entries were not centered just on his person, but necessarily included the work of renewal and the formation of members, always emphasizing perfect self-denial. We read in the next entry for October 15;

> The saints sought perfection with all their might, always mindful of Christ's words: 'Be you perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.' Christ's aim has to be mine if I sincerely desire to walk in their footsteps... Total self-denial! I must renounce not just this

world and its riches, comforts and vainglory, but consecrate and dedicate my total self, all my talents, all my natural and supernatural gifts to the welfare of the Church, its defense, preservation, propagation and growth.

What procedures should I employ to achieve this end? It would seem to me: not so much defense as much as attack in order to overcome and conquer. Thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christ, it should be our concern to gather and organize around ourselves people of good will, train them, prepare them for the work, and then together with them and through them to bring in Christ in order to renew all in Christ, to accept all things for Christ, to draw all things to Christ.

In the process of re-organizing the old Institute, it was necessary to prepare new instructions:

First of all it is necessary to become familiar with all that our predecessors have accomplished, use their experiences and adapt them to our present needs after discussing and deliberating them in common.

Therefore, our congregation should not hesitate to devote to the work of advancing and perfecting our organism the best, most devout, most learned, and most fitting among us; that in all our endeavors they be not less competent than lay people, but that they excel them and be an inspiration to them.

Laboring for the glory of God and the benefit of the Church, we need not fear that some project or work will not succeed. We must risk it, for with God there is no losing. He accepts our good will, our intention. Neither should we fear people: they cannot deprive us of heaven or God, consign us to perdition, or crowd us off the earth... And what is there to fear from worldly governments? Do we wish them untoward harm? It is not our desire to overthrow their thrones; neither is it our intention to collaborate with or take sides with any one political or national party. It is not our mind to destroy social order. (October 24, 1910). There is only one thing to fear: "To die not having suffered anything, not having borne hardships, not having labored for the Church and the salvation of souls, and all this for the greater glory of God." (October 27, 1910).

God grant that I might view everything from the perspective of eternity, that I weigh everything in the scales of the eternal... Unless the grain of wheat dies, it remains only a grain; but if it dies, it gives life and yields a rich harvest... So too should a man not fear to die, to be immersed in God. (November 17, 1910).

A lamp will not give light if there is no fuel. The preacher of

> the Gospel will not be a light to the world, will not be a spiritual force, a force attracting people to Christ, leading them in battle for the Church, energizing them, if the fire of zeal does not burn in his heart, if in it there are no virtues, no holiness. (February 5, 1911).

The experience of many hardships in the past, in addition to what he was experiencing now, strengthened his spirit and resignation to the will of God:

> It pleases you, my God, to lead me along the way of many difficulties, obstacles and sufferings; and I thank you very much... Lord, how much I love you! My soul is afire. I would like to offer even the last drop of my blood for you; to give you all, to renounce everything, even life itself, that your glory increase and that your Church flourish and grow. Of myself I have nothing, but by your grace I am rich.
>
> If I may ask you, Lord, grant that I may be in your Church like that cloth or dust-mop that cleans and then is discarded into a dark corner after use. May I be so used and worn-out as long as even one corner in your Church be cleansed, as long as your house be cleaner and purer... Grant, my God, that I be despised and spent that your glory increase; that in all things your will be done. (January 13, 1911).

He wrote thus while still a professor at the St. Petersburg Institute and secretly conducting spiritual exercises for the few novices. He soon became aware of the increased surveillance of the Russian authorities. Extreme care even in the smallest details had to be taken not to betray himself or involve others. Secrecy, not out of fear but as a precaution, is often mentioned in his writings. He notes that secrecy was necessary in the catacombs of ancient times, and equally so now when religious institutions are forbidden and the individual religious is held to be an enemy of the Russian Empire.

In spite of this danger, the formation of the newly revived Order is a theme that runs through almost all of the pages of the Diary. Beginning with purely spiritual matters, such as a true vocation, dedication, holiness, it ends with practical advice and the necessary natural qualities of a Marian priest or brother. Each and every one,

he urges, should be properly trained to work effectively and to be a leader. Because the Marian is a member of an organization, he should be, by that, better able to preside at meetings and speak more convincingly.

When the question arose about whether Marian priests should be involved in administering parishes, the renovator at first had some doubts, but then he made up his mind:

> I wonder if the religious priests should not join the ranks of the secular in their type of parish work? If this is done in an exemplary way, would it not redound to the good of the Church? Each parish church and rectory could become a small religious house... Each could be the center of spiritual life. (January 23, 1911).

In many entries of the Diary it was stated that it behooves the Marians to take on the hardest tasks, the kind of work others shun. In parish work, then, they should take the poorer, run-down parishes; the ones disorganized through lack of harmony, and put them in order. This is precisely what happened later in Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and even in the United States.

> Should we not infiltrate every place, especially the big cities, the universities, among the youth, in order to bring Christ there? (October 25, 1910).

There is no lack in the diary of references to the matter of nationalism. While it is stressed that the Marians are to work specifically among their own nationals, it is also advised that they not remain there exclusively.

> We are prepared, each of us, to work primarily in our own country for the salvation of our own people and for the glory of God... Now we must apply these words to many another Catholic country. It is our duty to be concerned with the whole Catholic Church and with all of humanity. We must rise above national rivalries of chauvinism and serve all equally, going everywhere that God be glorified... (January 25, 1911). God, give us the right people, unite us in harmony with all peoples, nations, and countries; that together we may honor and faithfully serve your Holy Name, and in that Name fight a holy war to spread and introduce your spirit everywhere. (January 20, 1913).

Much attention was placed on the preparation of the Congregation's priests and brothers:

> We must devote much effort in preparing, educating and training the men we need. We must be careful that we do not undertake something too hastily, and then have to abandon it. Much better that we complete and expand a project we start or take on. To give to the Church properly trained personnel should be one of our Congregation's chief concerns. (November 17, 1910). Nothing should be stinted to accomplish this. The interest that will accrue to our investment of money and effort will be substantial. (January 12, 1913). Our need is to have men who are energetic, competent and self-dependent; men who can look at life maturely; men of intelligence and devotion, to remain faithful to their aims and duties. (March 12, 1911).

Humility and renunciation are specially notable among the traits in Father Matulaitis:

> In a religious order it is very crucial to be wary of pride and vainglory because these can easily creep in under the guise of good works and good intentions. If we take only places of prominence and honor, our congregation would soon fall apart. High places will never lack for applicants. Our place is with the Christ who lived in poverty, obedience, hard work, hardships, humiliations and suffering. We should choose the places where others work grudgingly; places which are neglected, abandoned or scorned. (February 5, 1911).

When he resigned as professor at the Institute and made plans to transfer to Switzerland in furtherance of his plans for the Order, suddenly there were many who tried to dissuade him:

> It is remarkable, that until I decided to renounce all in order to follow Christ more closely, the Christ who lived in scorn, people hardly noticed me. In fact, they held me at a distance and called me an enemy of the Church, a liberal, socialist, Russian spy, etc. But when I took the first steps to really follow Christ, they began to offer me honors: rector of a seminary, capitular canon. When I was made Vice-Rector of the Institute without my consent, they began to dangle before my eyes the lures of early Rectorship and even the episcopacy.
>
> And then, until the actual work of forming the Order began, we too were the beneficiaries of the laissez faire attitude the civil

authorities had taken toward the Church. But when the first concrete steps were taken, they started the harassment along with negative criticism expressed by some priests. However, there was support from God-fearing priests and bishops. Our greatest trust was in the Lord. (August 17, 1911).

It has been such a long, long time since I have put even one word in this diary. In that time I have had to suffer much. May this be for God's glory. May all those sufferings, sorrows and heartaches be my penance for past sins. When I became a religious, little did I know that people would so hinder my following of Christ, especially the more perfect following which is not yet mine. So many rumors have arisen; so many obstacles! Lord, how much did the saints, your true servants, the true followers of your Son, have to suffer! I thank you, Lord, that you made bearable so much of the bitterness with manifold graces and extraordinary interior consolations. (November 18, 1912).

Prayer for Father Matulaitis was a true heart-to-heart conversation with God. It was his constant preoccupation and his sustenance at every step. He interwove it in every facet of religious formation, and strove to implant this life-giving seed in the soul of every member:

The mind has to be constantly active and occupied with something. If it does not revolve about God, toward holy things, then it tends to wander aimlessly, and sometimes to recall unpleasant events and often to selfishly feed our egoism. It is necessary to pray always... not just when we are on our knees in chapel. We should develop the spirit of constant prayer as when we go from place to place, when we have a free moment or are engaged in work that does not require special concentration. In a word, to pray everywhere and at all times. (November 24, 1910).

While at prayer, he occasionally experienced a direct stimulation of the soul and even ecstasy. Here are but two instances:

So much time has passed since our three-day retreat before the renewal of vows, and I have not as yet written down my resolutions... My God, grant that I may ever more diligently work and suffer for you and your Holy Church. May I be consumed like a candle on the altar with burning heat of love and labor for you and your Church. I thank you for leading me out of the world where I wandered in error and possibly misled others through misdirected zeal. God, my God, how sweet it is to serve you! What

> will I experience in heaven, when you fill the soul with such sweetness here on earth! Even the body quivers at your holy touch and feels transported to the highest heaven. The heart melts and swoons, the lips become numb; eyes are dimmed and arms and legs are bereft of feeling. The whole body is awash in an exquisite surge of holiness while the soul is absorbed in you. It appears that one could die of such love, of such sweetness, if it were not for your strength... Lord, Lord, how wonderful you are! (April 5, 1913).

In a later entry he expresses regret for being interrupted in writing because of the pressures of duties, especially in formulating the constitution. Even his meditations are distracted by this task. Of the second instance he writes:

> By your will, Lord, there have been many crosses, but also those many graces! May you be praised a thousand times for this! A very special thanks, Lord, for the unusual grace you granted me that time at Mass while the organist was playing the Gloria. A strange, benumbing quivering took over the whole body while the soul was transported in ineffable happiness. Lord, how dear you are! Who can recount it? If you grant an unworthy sinner such consolation and exaltation, what must it be for your true servants, your saints? Lord, do not reject me, have mercy on me, and let me be numbered among them. (February 23, 1914).

* * *

The above are just fragments from his diary, in reality reflections of his soul. There are so many of these in each page. Along with these, there are references to the conditions of the world and the response of the Church to its problems. In some cases, these references are made not just in passing, but get the fuller treatment by his practical mind inspired by love of God.

This diary is like an architectural plan exactly delineating the structure of an up-to-date religious order. It gives, not just the basic fundamentals, but includes every detail necessary for effective living. The new Marian goes into the world, not with a white habit as was done before, but with raiment and equipment proper to the evangelist of the present time and place. The Marian's field is not just the monastery, but the whole world.

Chapter 7

Fribourg and Rome

A rather detailed account of the journey to and two-week stay in Rome is contained in a special journal, and it is used to point up this significant interval in the life of Father Matulaitis.

> I left for Rome on November 14, 1911, quite early in the morning. My purpose was to transact some business for the Institute and for the Marian Order. We traveled by way of Lausanne, Montreux, St. Maurice, Domodossola, Milan, Genoa, and Pisa. I was in Rome on the morning of the 15th. The journey was pleasant and the weather was warm. The scenery in the mountains was beautiful. On the train two Jewish gentlemen engaged me in conversation about religion. In my travels I noticed that Jews seem to take special pleasure in discussing this subject with priests.
>
> After freshening up, I went to the monastery of the Resurrectionist Fathers to say Mass. I had breakfast with them and since they offered to take care of formalities at the Vicariate, I left my "Celebret" with them. I returned to the Hotel Bavaria where I am staying.

His first business call was with Monsignor Giuseppe Antonucci, the Assistant Secretary in the Sacred Congregation of Studies. To him he presented a letter from the Rector of the Institute, Father Alexander Kakowski (1862-1938), and a report on the state of that Institution which was to be reviewed and evaluated by the Congregation. Monsignor Antonucci agreed and asked Father Matulaitis to meet with him that afternoon at 4:30 at his residence on the Via dell'Anima.

On his arrival, he gave the Secretary several books published by the faculty at the Institute as an indication of the work going on there. Monsignor Antonucci had already examined the report on the Institute and noted that the signature of the Bishop of Mogilev was missing. Father Matulaitis explained that this document was secretly prepared abroad and that it was impossible to reach the bishop before this trip. This satisfied the Secretary and he promised to forward it to the Secretary of the Congregation, Monsignor Ascenso Dandini.

Earlier in the afternoon of that same day, Father Matulaitis was called on by Father Augustus Mosser (1857-1930), the Procurator General of the Resurrectionist Fathers, who became his constant companion and guide as they visited churches, museums, institutions and various individuals. One of these was the Armenian Rite Archbishop of Lvov, Joseph Theophilus Teodorowicz, whom they visited at the Collegium Polonicum. Two seminarians from Warsaw, Ladislaus Lysik and Leo Kalinowski, who were studying at the College, were given letters from Father Bronikowski, and each was interviewed separately by Father Matulaitis to discuss their becoming Marian priests.

While Father Matulaitis was conversing with the Archbishop, Father Jan Gralewski came in and inquired whether he was establishing a religious order in Fribourg as he had heard from a student. Father Matulaitis was unwilling to discuss this openly and turned the conversation to other matters. Later, there was a meeting with Archbishop Francis Albin Symon (1842-1918), a former professor and rector of the Institute.

On November 16, Father Matulaitis and Father Mosser went to the Sacred Congregation for Religious, but accomplished nothing because it was taken up with other matters. After lunch they wanted to meet Monsignor Adam Stephen Sapiega (1867-1952), an official of the Roman Curia, but he was not in, so Father Matulaitis spent the rest of the day praying in various churches. He

reviewed once more his report on the Marian Congregation and made a few additions after careful thought.

The following day Father Matulaitis went again to the Sacred Congregation and was received by Monsignor Rodolfo Caroli (1869-1921), who was in charge of religious congregations for men and the assistant secretary.

> I explained to him the present status of our congregation: that I had resigned from the Institute in St. Petersburg and had moved to Fribourg because it was impossible to establish a religious community in Russia, especially when the candidates were priests; that this was a special target for the Russian authorities; and that among the students at the University in Fribourg there were many priests and seminarians from the occupied countries who could better cover their identities in Switzerland. The Russian government did not pay too much attention to Fribourg, but positively detested Innsbruck and was afraid of Rome. Therefore, I believe that we can much more easily and freely continue our training, organize in Fribourg and then later return to Russia without undue hindrance and continue our work. I also reported that this was discussed and agreed to by several bishops.

These arguments were substantiated by this news item from Russia, printed in the April 4, 1911 edition of "Civilta Cattolica," a journal published in Rome by the Jesuits:

> At this time an intense manhunt is going on for the so-called "secret" religious congregations. This was decreed and is being conducted by the Russian government. When the agents, making raids even in private homes, find a small altar, prayer-book or some religious article, that is sufficient for them to decide that they found a secret chapel of some monastery. Such raids were made in Kamienec, Zitomir, Kiev, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, Polock, and other places. Some priests who were accused of knowing about the existence of secret religious communities were relieved of their duties by their bishops upon orders, of course, of the Minister of the Interior. As is seen from the circular issued by the government, even the associations of lay-people known as the Third Order of St. Francis (Tertiaries), and the Apostleship of Prayer, were hounded to the extent that promoting them was a crime.

Routine details were also taken up with Monsignor Caroli. Father Matulaitis told him that he was not only the

Superior General but also Novice Master because there were only three members under vows, ten novices, and a number of postulants. He also wanted to receive clear instructions on what should be done in the case where a bishop in Russia will give verbal permission to his priests to enter the Order but will not put it in writing for fear of being arrested and punished. The discussion also touched on the opposition of bishops unwilling to allow their priests to become members. Monsignor Caroli replied that a suitable solution is always possible through patience, prayer, and friendly dialogue.

Father Matulaitis presented petitions that he be confirmed as Superior General, that the novitiate be established in Fribourg, and to be allowed to accept postulants over the age of 36. Monsignor Caroli advised him that answers would be forthcoming in the morning. As the conference was ending, Father Matulaitis remembered to ask whether recited Masses could be substituted for sung Masses in their chapel, and he was told to add this to the other petitions.

That same day Father Matulaitis was invited to lunch by Archbishop Teodorowicz. Monsignor Sapiega and two Resurrectionist priests were also present. There were some questions from the Archbishop and from Monsignor Sapiega about some specific problems in Russia. Father Matulaitis makes this entry in his journal:

> It was very unpleasant for me to give answers about some individuals, and I did so only after praying for divine guidance, and only in answer to a specific question and no more.

His journal continues:

> About five o'clock in the afternoon, I was with Monsignor Antonucci to whom I reported briefly about our situation and that I intended to remain in Fribourg. I also requested that he intercede in obtaining certain faculties and privileges for the Order. He was willing and we made a list. He promised to inquire and give me an answer on Tuesday afternoon, with the reminder that my appointment with the Congregation of Studies was for Monday, November 20, at eleven o'clock.

Father Matulaitis prepared all the necessary papers and left them with Monsignor Caroli at the Congregation for Religious. After lunch he and Father Mosser visited the imposing basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls where they admire its beauty and prayed. About seven o'clock they visited Monsignor Sapiega and spent the evening discussing the life of the Church in Russia. On leaving, Monsignor Sapiega invited Father Matulaitis for lunch on the next Tuesday. On Sunday, November 19, Father Matulaitis went to the basilica of St. John Lateran:

> There I went to confession and attended two Masses. Afterward I returned to my hotel room, read and prayed all day.

On November 20 he kept his appointment at the Sacred Congregation of Studies where he met Monsignor Dandini. The Secretary was pleased with the report on the Institute at St. Petersburg and added that it would be necessary according to the Congregation's policy that philosophy be introduced. Father Matulaitis explained that it was even difficult to introduce any of the natural sciences into the School of Theology for the reason that the government would not allow it and, even if it did, it could provide some Russian Orthodox teacher which was neither desirable nor prudent. Monsignor Dandini insisted that the policy of the Congregation be followed: that there be at least two years of philosophy. He suggested that this be attempted under the guise of introducing cosmology and the philosophy of nature. And, he added, the pre-eminence of philosophy has to be maintained in Russia even as it should be everywhere else.

Father Matulaitis kept his appointment for lunch with Monsignor Sapiega on Tuesday. Archbishop Teodorowicz was the other guest. Again from the journal:

> We spoke about the problems of the Church in Russia and those of the Institute. The two of them urged that I pay a visit to Father Vladimir Ledochowski (1866-1942), then a Consultor to the Superior General of the Jesuits and later the General; and also to Cardinal de Lai, the Secretary of the Congregation of the

Consistory. I replied that I would if they insisted and if there was a serious reason; otherwise, I would not waste their time. Monsignor Sapiega said he would inquire and find out from them if it was necessary.

Their constant inquisitiveness irked me. In speaking of church affairs or any other serious matter, one should take responsibility for one's words. It seemed to me that here there was too much concern for politics and the niceties of diplomacy. I came for reasons other than this. To serve the Church I am prepared to do anything, for this is my ideal; and I believe more in work guided by the Holy Spirit than I do in the cleverness of diplomacy or any bureaucratic maneuvering. My desire is to be a real worker in God's field and not some kind of politician or diplomat. We discussed further the establishing of better communications with Rome whereby factual and speedy reports could reach here, especially the more recent activities of the government, newspaper articles, etc.

I had a free day. After my many tasks, I felt exhausted. I visited the church of St. Cecilia with Father Mosser and spent some time in prayer. Later Father Sergei Grum-Grzymajlo (1866-1945) came to see me and we agreed to meet in the morning and discuss the matters for which he came to Rome.

Here a little of the background of this priest is necessary to understand references to him in the journal. For reasons of brevity he will be referred to as Father Grum. His family was among the nobility of Poland and had become Russified even to the point of joining the Russian Orthodox Church. The Grums had great wealth and owned estates in the eastern part of Russia, the province of Viatka. After graduating from high-school in Russia, Sergei went abroad for further schooling. He studied philosophy and history for a year in Berlin and then transferred to Heidelberg for further study and became a Roman Catholic. In 1904 he enrolled in the theologate of Innsbruck and lived in the Jesuit residence hall. He was ordained a priest in 1908 and a year later went to live with his parents in St. Petersburg where he made no public appearances as a priest or a Catholic. While in St. Petersburg he became acquainted with the professors at the Institute and other priests. Doubtless this is how he

became acquainted with Father Matulaitis. At their bidding he went to Rome in 1911 to give information about the Church in Russia and about the Institute.

Most likely it was through the Jesuits in Innsbruck that Rome came to know about this unusual student of theirs, his background, his facility in many languages, his many influential contacts in Russia. It is known that Pope Pius X hoped for his help in re-uniting the Russian Orthodox and Catholic churches. For that reason and for the fact that he was erudite and a very able diplomat, he had easy access to the various church officials in Rome.

> I met Father Grum early that morning on his way to see Father Ledochowski and asked that he find out when I could visit him. In my free time I visited more churches and prayed and planned about what I intended to bring up with Father Ledochowski. My plans and concerns were the subject of conversations with Father Grum who had moved into my hotel.

Father Matulaitis had written into the Marian Fathers constitutions that superiors should become acquainted with the activities and rules of other religious orders to learn what they might accommodate to their own. It was for this reason that he then conferred with Father Ledochowski. After explaining why and how the Marian Congregation had been renewed, he asked his opinion about whether it would be injurious to the community spirit of the members who would have to live outside the community in parishes or seminaries to engage in pastoral ministry or teaching and could only occasionally meet in community with their own. Father Ledochowski listened understandingly and agreed that such activities were necessary and commendable and that the members would not suffer unduly.

The further item of conversation was how to deal with bishops favorable to the Order as such, but who put obstacles in the way of any of their priests expressing a desire to join. Father Ledochowski responded that previously when this situation came up with the Jesuits, they would not accept such candidates and would side with

the bishop. But now they are convinced that this was the wrong procedure. The Decree of Pope Benedict XIV guided their present procedure. Father Matulaitis was advised to take up this specific problem with Cardinal Vives y Tuto who was Prefect of the Congregation for Religious.

Father Ledochowski further urged that we become concerned very particularly with the spiritual formation of our candidates. It was his experience that the Jesuit priests who prayed much were more effective in reaching the people. He added that we, as exemplars of supernatural life, should first develop it within ourselves so as to present to the people spiritual matters, the needs of the Church, the Gospel, and not other incidentals.

In matters of education he advised an extensive grounding in philosophy as preparation for the study of theology; and that in theology, Thomism be our method. He made the observation that in Poland spiritual life was tinged with too much sentimentalism. I said that we are trying to put it on a healthy philosophical and theological basis. I assured him that we were aware of the Russian oppression and that we are making special efforts that the Congregation be free of any coloration of nationalism and political or social aspects, and that we be a truly universal institution placing above all else the service of God and the Church.

After leaving Father Ledochowski I went to the Congregation for Religious. Monsignor Caroli told me that all the petitions were approved, except the one about recited Masses in our chapel. I saw then that I had made a mistake in not taking up my affairs with Cardinal Vives y Tuto at first hand. It seems that in conducting official business, Rome wants to know whom it is dealing with. Acquaintance weighs heavily. This knowledge determines whether your business will be well understood or not. For myself and my delegates a well-thought out plan will include a thorough knowledge of the people to be met and seen.

That afternoon in the basilica of St. Peter, at the tomb of the holy Apostle, I promised that I and the congregation would be single-minded in our service of God, the Church, and the salvation of souls.

About five o'clock in the evening I met with Cardinal Vives y Tuto. I had planned what I would say. When I began a short explanation of the condition of our congregation, about our experiences with the bishops and the conditions of the Church in Russia, it was soon apparent that he already was well acquainted with all of this. He remembered that I had seen him two years ago about renovating the Order and had been very cordial. It was then

that he told me that they had deliberated on November 23 on the matters of our community and that many things were confirmed. He promised me his continuing support and gave me three books as a token gift. I asked him to keep us in mind with fatherly concern, that he bless me, our congregation, and all our loved ones. I left with uplifted spirits. How good is the father of all religious, Cardinal Vives y Tuto! On my way back to the hotel I thanked the Lord sincerely for the favors received and spent the evening in prayer for our community, all its benefactors, its enemies.

The journal entry for November 26:

I attended Mass this morning in St. Peter's basilica and prayed. Later I went to the Collegium Polonicum to bid farewell to Archbishop Teodorowicz, but he was not in.

By previous arrangement Father Matulaitis met with Monsignor Sapiega for some general conversation on church matters. He reports:

Very soon Monsignor Sapiega made the proposal that I come to Rome to represent Russia, Lithuania, Poland, even Poznan's and Galicia's affairs so as to give the Apostolic See the necessary information about conditions of the Church in those areas. He said that he had already spoken about this to Cardinal de Lai, and that all this could be arranged. He told me that I would become an official in the Sacred Consistorial Congregation where the most important matters of the Church are deliberated, and in that way I could take part and have a voice at all sessions. It was evident, he said, that then I could not expect thereafter to take any post in the Russian Empire. This, too, he had taken up with the Cardinal with the understanding that the future of such an official be assured. The Galician ordinaries were prepared to take care of his upkeep and remuneration.

This was the convenient time to appoint such an official because the present Pope would agree willingly, and who knows about the future. Monsignor Sapiega insisted that this kind of representative is absolutely necessary in Rome because the present sources of information are garbled with errors and inaccuracies, and Rome does not know whom to trust. This, he concluded, is harmful to the Church.

I agreed that such a person is very necessary. As for myself as a candidate for this position I enumerated a number of difficulties which would make it improbable: a) I had just begun to serve the newly revived Order and I cannot stop just now; b) I am a

Lithuanian and would the Poles trust me? c) I don't know enough Italian, but this is minor because I can learn it easily; d) I do not feel that I have the talent for diplomacy; my French is not adequate and my talents as host are meager. Furthermore, I am voluble enough when I speak to individuals, but in social gatherings I speak little and cannot easily participate in conversations; e) generally speaking, my ideal in life is different. Until now I have shunned positions of honor and I prefer to follow Christ in that way; f) most important, I added, my work for the Order won't allow it. At this time I must devote myself entirely to this. Monsignor Sapiega asked if it would be possible to transfer the generalate to Rome and fulfill both positions. It seems to me that this is impossible. Finally, he asked me to consider and give him an answer on November 28. He invited me to lunch and said that Father Grum and Archbishop Teodorowicz would be there.

On my way back to the hotel I wondered why I was meeting with so many dilemmas now that I have decided to follow Christ in a life of poverty, simplicity and obedience. When I lived in private pursuits, nobody offered me honors or important positions, nobody tried to persuade me toward anything of that kind; and now I am getting new and enticing offers. The dilemma is that in them I am able to accomplish much for the glory of God. I must consider most seriously what must be done. It was just such a short time ago that I took the way of Christ literally. I decided that this way for me is the proper way. I made up my mind to be adamant in refusing these offers.

Without revealing the content of my conversation with Monsignor Sapiega, I shared some of my thoughts with Father Grum. I expected that he would agree with me, but I was surprised when he tried to convince me that despite my present attitude and determination I would still have to leave my present work after a year or two to become bishop somewhere or to take a position in Rome. Hearing him out, I agreed that in principle nothing should be rejected, but that I must always take into consideration the greater glory of God. It was a deep conviction with me that I cannot reject my first duty which was that the Order be well established and made strong, and nothing else. Furthermore, I was displeased that the Order and its members had to be involved in these diplomatic maneuvers. My ideal is that we be good workers in the Lord's vineyard and not the pawns of diplomacy. I must continue the work I embarked on despite Monsignor Sapiega or Father Grum.

On Monday, November 27, I went to the Sacred Congregation for Religious to see if the necessary documents were ready. It

seems that the Congregation was not at work that day because of a secret consistory where the Pope appointed new Cardinals and other officials. Monsignor Sapiega was appointed Bishop of Cracow. As long as the morning was free, I spent the time in St. Peter's basilica, praying for guidance in the offers made me. With God's help and inspiration, I made the final decision that I am not to even think about leaving my immediate duties. It is true that from a higher position one's influence would be wider, but who is to say what the influence will be and whether it will be for the good. This is the area of the supernatural. God alone knows in what position man's influence will be best.

I mused on the fact that some people in lofty positions accomplish less good than those in humbler ones. It has happened that a man in a lower place produces much good, and becomes worthless when elevated. It is better that I put myself completely into God's hands and, for now, continue the work I started.

While riding the streetcar on Tuesday, November 28, I met Father Ledochowski. I mentioned the proposal Monsignor Sapiega had made, and it appeared that he knew of it. His comment was direct and terse: 'Age quod agas' — do what you are doing. This made my resolution final.

I went to the Congregation for Religious again and found that only one document was completed and that the others would be delivered to me. In a book-shop which handled old and rare books, I bought several, among which was "The Beatification and Canonization of Saints," by Pope Benedict XIV and "Formation of the Religious Life," by De Paz.

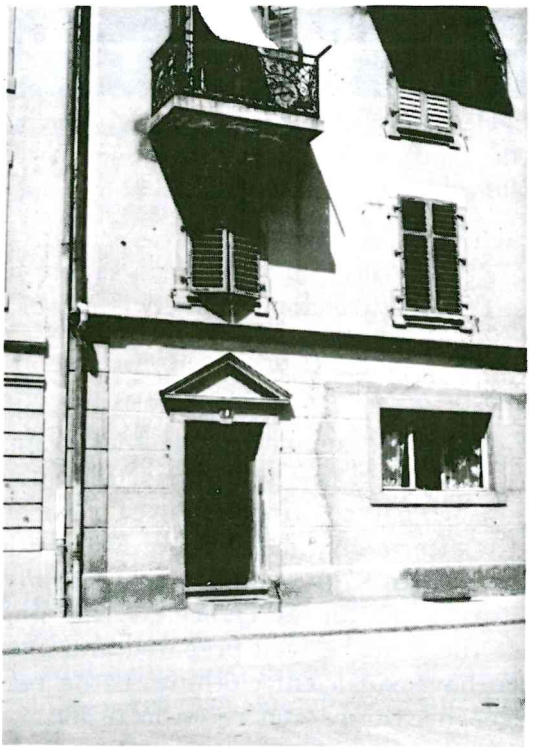
At one o'clock Father Grum and I had lunch with Monsignor Sapiega and Archbishop Teodorowicz. The conversation turned to philosophy and the Russian Catholics of the Eastern Rite. When Father Grum left, the topic of my remaining in Rome came up. I summed up briefly the various difficulties and said that I could think about that step only after two years. We discussed various candidates for the position in Rome and I suggested my friend Father Henry Przezdziecki, pastor of Lodz, as the most capable and suitable from among my acquaintances.

Father Matulaitis left Rome for Fribourg on the evening of November 28. En route he stopped at Montreux to visit his cousin. He had made many worthwhile contacts in Rome and decided that it paid to go there personally to deal directly with the Cardinals.

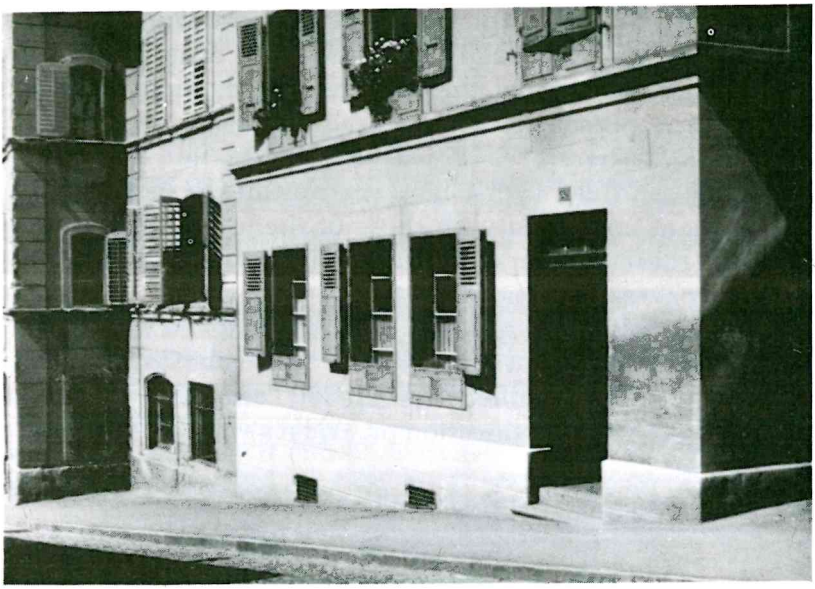
Father Matulaitis' attention to detail in every aspect of life is illustrated in the conversations he had with Father

Grum who had lived for longer periods of time with the Jesuits. Father Matulaitis had already completed the constitution and rule of the Marian Congregation, but had not as yet personally experienced living in a religious community. Therefore, he was anxious to find out from one who had lived it just how the routines prescribed for the Marians compared with those of the Jesuit Order. The gist of these conversations also indicates the Marian outlook on religious life.

The schedule of spiritual exercises was discussed and Father Grum assured him that it was substantially the same as for the Jesuits. The use of "discipline," a light scourging as self-mortification on Fridays was still practiced



House in Friburg at 8 rue du Pere Girard where Marian Fathers lived 1911-1913



House in Fribourg at 4 rue Grande Fontaine where Marian Fathers lived 1913-1918

by the Jesuits, but Father Matulaitis stated that this was voluntary with the Marians under the prudent guidance of a confessor. Personally, he preferred "sancta filiorum Dei libertas" — the holy freedom of the children of God; but it was to be understood by all that mortification is essential. The individual should choose what he finds most beneficial.

The question of studies came up. It was agreed that a prefect of studies be appointed and that examinations be mandatory, at least in the more important subjects. While discussing meals, Father Grum inquired if the novices were given a light afternoon snack. Father Matulaitis explained that these are given to the younger and more frail. For the others it was a matter of choice. It was important, he added, that the food be well prepared and adequate; that each novice have sufficient clothing, bathe regularly, and learn to keep his things and room in order.

The living quarters for the Marians were very cramped and there were no facilities for outdoor recreation. This

brought up the subject of vacations. The custom among the Jesuits was to take the postulants and novices to the country for fifteen days where they had no prescribed duties. Then they made a ten-day retreat and worked throughout the year, holidays not excepted.

The conversation then turned to ways of protecting the Order from involvement with worldly political influences. Both agreed that where these cannot be elevated to serve the human spirit, they had best be avoided rather than getting involved in useless controversy which would only harm the basic aims of a religious institution.

Father Grum touched upon his own difficulties with living in community and Father Matulaitis agreed that it was a psychological problem. While respecting individual needs, the Marians felt that these problems need not keep one from being a good religious. The problems of individualism were dealt with more stringently by the older orders, but the Marians would be more flexible in this matter. If a member desired occasional moments of solitude, this should be respected even when taking a walk. It is important, Father Matulaitis said, only that one be dedicated, humble, practice Christian charity, and keep the vows and counsels.

Father Grum brought up the question of caring for seriously ailing parents of the religious. They agreed that the rule should make provision that members be able to care for them within reason. In Father Grum's case, he wanted to show his parents a special love because they were opposed to Catholicism, and he would want them to know that in his church even the vowed religious had opportunity to take care of this familial need. Father Matulaitis firmly asserted that it was a duty: "Caritas super omnia" — charity above all else.

Father Matulaitis expressed the desire that he or someone he delegates visit one of the Jesuit novitiates, live there for about a week and consult with the director. Father Grum suggested that he do so himself. On parting, Father Matulaitis wished him success in obtaining his

doctorate and urged him to think seriously about joining the Marians as he had mentioned before. This, he said, would be of benefit to the Marians. Father Grum promised to think about it and pray.

When Father Grum returned to St. Petersburg, he lived with his parents, and it is not known if he undertook priestly ministry. After the bolshevik revolution in 1917, he went to Fribourg and lived with the Marians for about a year, but did not become a member of the Order. It was about this time that the Marians left for their own countries. For Father Grum to return to Russia was out of the question. He went to Munich and lived for a time with the Jesuits. In 1930, he moved to Austria and was chaplain for a convent of nuns. In all this time his relations with the Jesuits at Innsbruck remained cordial, but he did not join their Order; he still valued his freedom, Father Grum died in 1945 in Switzerland.

* * *

The work of a Novice Master is never easy. It demands knowledge, but even more, an effective way of passing it on. Above all, it demands patience. A deep personal knowledge of each novice's character and idiosyncracies is of paramount importance. The first Marian candidates were mostly priests who had graduated from the Institute in St. Petersburg and had some experience in pastoral work. To mold them through spiritual exercises in a monastic setting took enormous tact because they were already cast into set habits, despite their dedication.

The first site of the novitiate was a crowded boarding-house which the Marians shared with others. This curtailed some of their activities. The full work of the novitiate began when they rented a building on the rue Pere Girard in the upper part of the city near the university. We are fortunate to have a primary source, depicting life in the

novitiate, in the still unpublished work of Father Wisniewski:

> The schedule of the day, set by Father Matulaitis as Novice Master, was similar to that of a seminary. Rising at five o'clock (though he himself rose about three or four o'clock for prayer and work); meditation in common, and then the priests would say their Masses. Later, a modest breakfast and study at the university or in the house. Just before noon there was a short explanation of the Rule, examination of conscience; then lunch and recreation in common in the house, or walking if the weather permitted.
>
> In the afternoon there was spiritual reading, discussions and commentary by the Master; then study in private until dinner. After the evening meal: recreation, night prayers, points for the morrow's meditation, and retiring. There were no other prescribed exercises. The recitation of the Rosary and making the Stations of the Cross were left to the convenience of the individual, as were additional private prayers.
>
> In retrospect, what gave attractiveness and worth to it all was the good spirits and mood which prevailed.
>
> The most welcome part of the schedule was spiritual reading. The field of Christian perfection was ours to analyze in the three-volume work of Alfonso Rodriguez (1537-1616), the Jesuit expert on the spiritual life. Rodriguez interlaced his teachings with copious examples and illustrations from the life of the Fathers of the Church. Each of us in turn read from the book and gave a synopsis of the section read. Discussions and a word of comment from the master would follow. This was enough sustenance for the mind and the soul to last twenty-four hours.
>
> The recreation after the two meals was varied, but mostly it was a sharing of impressions and things heard in the university lectures. There were many new things we hadn't encountered in the seminaries of our countries where Jesuit textbooks and methods prevailed. From these arose comparisons, discussions, and arguments. Some defended the older viewpoints and others liked the new. The most eloquent and decidedly the most heated of the participants was Father Joseph Vaitkevicius (1880-1949), when he defended Thomism with a fierce vigor, having been in the Dominican novitiate for a time in Fiesole. The novice master smiled and tried to keep peace among the combatants.
>
> Besides this, there was a sharing of what was read in books and periodicals. This was very useful because in that way we were able to become acquainted with events and trends in other European countries. And this was highly recommended by Father Matulaitis.

For variety, he gave us lessons in the techniques of speaking: vocal exercises; exercises for the palate, tongue, lips and breathing. We used to practice these, and there was much amusement and laughter, but later we found how useful these were for preaching sermons and missions.

Father Matulaitis was also concerned about physical exercise. At recreation he suggested various methods and demonstrated some of them despite his handicapped arm and leg.

We took advantage of sunny days for walking, and on Sundays we took longer hikes beyond the city by crossing the railroad bridge across the Sarine. These longer trips might have been too much for the director, but he went along and enjoyed watching us play ball and listening to our banter. There were a few among the novices who were not much younger than the director: Fathers Bronikowski, Dvaranauskas, Kudirka, all in their forties.

The matter of proper nutrition and diet for the members of the community was important to him. He was always careful that the food be ample and well-prepared, in spite of the fact that for himself he had lost his appetite for eating and found no pleasure in it. He invited two housekeepers from Lithuania: Miss Agatha Kudirka, Father Kudirka's sister, and Miss Marcella Jurevicius. The former supervised the buying of food and the care of the house; the latter, the kitchen and cooking. Later, in Lithuania, both joined the congregation of nuns founded by Father Matulaitis, known as the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

* * *

What goes into the making of a religious, a monk? It is worth continuing the memoirs Father Wisniewski provided us which give us details of life in a novitiate. He had been Father Matulaitis' pupil in the seminary, in the Institute, and was now in the novitiate. His memoirs are here presented in the first person, somewhat shortened, and freely translated.

I came to Fribourg at the beginning of August 1911, and found the Marian house without difficulty. Father Matulaitis greeted me with such warmth that I felt I was the only one there. I found a group of friends who were conversing happily and without restraint in the free atmosphere of Switzerland. There was little time at the moment for making or renewing acquaintances because

the eight-day retreat which was to conclude on the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, the day of our formal reception into the novitiate, was about to begin. The eight days of the retreat sped so quickly that it seemed only one day. It was here, in the work he loved best, that I got to know my teacher intimately. Under his care we felt like one love-filled family under the cloak of Mary, our heavenly Mother, near the heart of our Heavenly Father. As much as I would like to give a personality profile of each of the retreatants, I turn directly to Father Matulaitis. More like the father of a family than a teacher and director, he was able to create an atmosphere in the novitiate where we felt like care-free, spoiled children. There was laughter everywhere. A stumble, a sneeze, a mispronounced word in spiritual reading... laughter.

Once, I didn't hear the bell for lunch and I went out to the corridor and everything was quiet there, so I presumed the bell-ringer had forgotten. I rang the bell loudly and hurried to the dining room. They were all seated at table. Such laughter! I thought someone would choke, especially Father Kulvietis or Father Vaitkevicius whose amusement surpassed that of all the others. Of course, it wasn't all jokes and laughter; the novitiate demanded hard and concentrated work. It was the time for toil: spiritual, in the novitiate; intellectual in the university.

The world of the novitiate was entirely different from that of the seminary or the Institute. I had to struggle with entirely new points of view which in many respects broke down the old. For nine years I had been drilled in Jesuit theories and methods, and here these were being criticized and I was being "Dominicanized." Stubbornly I defended every phase of my previous training, every Jesuit thesis. I argued vehemently with Father Vaitkevicius, an immovable Thomist, until finally I had to retreat and surrender. Father Matulaitis acted as referee, helping me in my quandaries with plain and practical solutions.

Despite my defeat at the hands of Father Vaitkevicius, I felt a great sense of relief, both mental and spiritual. I had left the Institute with a head full of memorized data. This system can be defended on the grounds that it is practical for gaining a general education and for the many things a priest must know in his pastoral ministry. Here at Fribourg I found something else, specialization. In place of the heavy weights memory had to carry, I found illuminating principles by which I could draw many of my own conclusions. This made for easier understanding and less cumbersome synthesis. The Dominican way, previously resisted with steely determination, became acceptable; in fact comfortable.

The training in spiritual life we received right there in the

house. The director had a fine library which he had brought with him to Fribourg and which he had accumulated at great cost to himself in effort and selection. He once referred to this: "I had to read each book a number of times and select one from many which I might recommend to you." He disliked mentioning money, so it wasn't monetary value he had in mind. We knew what a treasure we had and fell upon it hungrily. Our reading was supervised with extraordinary care and love. He recommended that everyone study St. Thomas Aquinas: "There you will find theology, spiritual life, and mysticism."

I studied along with Father Kudirka who noticed how quickly I was thumbing through the Summa Theologica. He looked at me quizzically without saying a word. Finally, he stopped me at one of the more abstruse passages and asked me what it meant. I paused, re-read it, and had to admit that I didn't know. He laughed and said quietly, "Oh, I thought I was the only numbskull." We continued, but held to the famous Dominican dictum: "Thomas is best explained by Thomas himself."

All of us read the books indicated by the director, but I looked for more. Once he called me a 'book-glutton,' possibly because I went through the books too fast, but he didn't stop me. At one time, I decided to read the twelve-volume work of St. Francis de Sales. Half way through, he suggested something more weighty. I think it was the Life of Christ by Ludolph of Saxony. He might have feared that St. Francis would take the starch out of me, especially the letters to his spiritual daughters. Father Matulaitis had in mind a more "soldiery" formation. We gained much more from the daily meditations he personally led for us than we did from our private reading.

The best of theories cannot withstand the power of good example, and this we had in Father Matulaitis. His life was entirely open to us because he lived with us day in and day out. Despite this, we little suspected how much each day of his life was a sacrifice in the truest meaning of that word. Of frail health since childhood, in constant pain because of his affected limbs, he personified for us the martyrdom of always being cheerful. He wore an orthopedic support on his weakened leg and walked slowly and with difficulty. It was a real pleasure for him when he could stroll with us on a warm day or sit in the warmth of the sun which, he claimed, was so beneficial for him. We hardly appreciated this because we were not in constant pain.

Occasionally I would happen on him resting in bed during the day. He would say, "I cannot sleep, but even this is good; it allows the ants to leave the body." The "ants" were his frayed nerves. By

nature he was very sensitive and nervous, but exteriorly he was always remarkably self-composed. We found him the same in the seminary, the Institute, and now in the novitiate: peaceful, uncomplaining, giving no hint of his sufferings. It was only after a few months that we woke up to the need of placing a cushion on the kneeler where he spent many long hours.

The exhausted organism loses its relish for food. Observing our hearty appetites, he once remarked that he had lost his taste for food. This disturbed my conscience since I was hardly ever the last to come to the table, and I remarked to him that I should mortify myself in eating. He put his hand on my shoulder and said gently, "Thank God that you have a good appetite. There will come a time when you won't."

The nature of his mortifications was known to God alone, and I surely did not know them; but it was certain that he did not impose any artificial or superfluous practices on us. In fact, he advised against it: "It is not necessary to lace your dessert with ashes, nor brew your coffee with bitter herbs. Use the gifts of God prudently and gratefully." He always placed interior spirituality above all external practices. He was the paragon of industriousness. Laziness was his special bane and he used each moment profitably. Hence his advice: "An hour is made up of minutes; and the oceans of single droplets of water."

Spiritual direction was his forte. This he did with love and the masterly touch of a good teacher. His insight was so developed that it seemed he was a mind-reader. His greatest concern was to instill charity and humility.

His methods of direction included the total person. He insisted on physical exercise and the development of those faculties we were to use particularly in our ministry, viz., in effective speaking and our presiding at liturgical services. He put great emphasis on proper chant and our deportment at the altar. Each of us practiced, under his supervision, the "dry mass" (without consecration), in order to become conscious of distracting or incorrect mannerisms. In speaking, his advice was: "Formulate your thought clearly before you speak it, and then express it carefully and forcefully, paying attention to each syllable to avoid stammering or improper accenting. Prepare the chalice and missal well in advance to eliminate fussing at the altar."

Passivity, slovenliness, and unmanliness were characteristics very distasteful to him. The methods he taught for developing spiritual life exuded dynamism and freedom, the "freedom of God's children" he so often mentioned. The summary of all he tried to instill in us was that in the service of God all the natural powers

and all supernatural graces should be utilized for an intelligent service.

Father John Sobczyk, another novice who became a Marian in a rather unusual way, is worth quoting:

I met Father Matulaitis for the first time in November 1913 under unusual circumstances. I was a young priest, a student at Lvov Polytechnic and had decided to go to the Catholic university in Fribourg for an answer to some personal problems. Until then I had not heard about Father Matulaitis or the Marian Congregation. While visiting a former teacher, Father Robert Wierzejski in the Marian house, a priest of striking personality came in and I felt an immediate attraction toward him. This was Father Matulaitis. How strange are the ways of the Lord! Just two weeks before, I had gone to the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin in Vilnius and had prayed for guidance in arranging my life. I could not believe that the answer was given me so soon and in this unusual fashion.

That afternoon Father Matulaitis and I went to the house chapel and there I saw a replica of the picture which is the focal point of the famous Vilnius shrine. It must have been a providential coincidence because after the visit I found out that Father Matulaitis was the renovator of the Marian Order and that he was director of the novitiate in Fribourg. This, I felt, was the answer I was seeking. Without too much delay I asked to be accepted as a novice. I was given a room next to his.

For about six months I had opportunity to observe him closely and I was struck by his prayerful and devoted life. The daily instructions on the Constitutions and the Rule provided me with the fundamentals of a more perfect life, but I must admit that I gained more from the living example of the Superior. What impressed me was his unwavering kindness in the attention he showed everyone in all circumstances; his readiness to pay compliments, his benevolence, acuity of mind; and, above all, his faith.

At times I noticed that there was a light in his room even at three or four o'clock in the morning and heard the rustle of paper-work. I compared his personality with the demeaning caricatures of a priest as portrayed in the socialist press, which might have been a part of my former unrest. My acquaintanceship with Father Matulaitis refuted all those slanders.

The difficulties about the faith, which had risen from my earlier indiscriminate reading, even now would occasionally assail me, but his simple and sincere explanations soothed the unrest of a doubting soul. 'Keep studying calmly,' he said to me, 'and the

doubts will vanish in the light of divine truth. Once we grasp the fundamentals of Catholic teaching, we realize that previously we only tilted at wind-mills.'

And if my heart was yet disturbed by any of these doubts, it was stilled by the sight of Father Matulaitis at the altar offering the Sacrifice with such devotion and attention. Similarly, as he spoke to us, the warmth of his soul warmed us also. He required of us that we be composed, dedicated and self-sacrificing in our service of God; and at the same time he provided us with the living ideal which spurred us to readiness to undertake all for God.

When the priests returned to their homes after the novitiate, they had to work in secret. We were warned about what would happen if we were detected by the Russian authorities, but this did not frighten us. I remember that shortly after arriving at Fribourg I entertained the idea of working in the foreign missions. This led Father Matulaitis to explain that our duty was to return to our own countries where we were needed much more than in the missions. The pagans in their lands, he said, were much less responsible before God because they had heard nothing of Him, but our people were Catholic, at least in name, and there was so little of Catholicity in their lives.

While reading the tenets of our congregation I thought at times that some important political situation or problem of our nation was slighted, and I would rise in hot defense. Father Matulaitis reminded me that national politics was not our main concern. The priest is the greatest patriot and serves his country best when he is a good and holy priest, for then he strengthens the basis for all national life as determined by the Creator. Sometimes, when we talked about the Russians we used the pejorative term "muscovite" for them, but we were reprimanded and told that it did not behoove us to speak slightingly of any nation. If some individuals did wrong, it was not proper to condemn the nation.

Poles and Lithuanians lived together in the novitiate in Fribourg and there was never any ridiculing of one's patriotic feelings. We studied each other's language and maintained harmony and brotherly love.

* * *

The Marian novitiate began to operate in Fribourg about the middle of August 1911 with ten candidates. It was officially approved in November when Father Matu-

laitis was in Rome. It operated in Fribourg for seven years, until 1918, when other novitiates were established.

The records of entrance and profession of vows, which would normally give exact statistics, are unexplainably missing. From other sources it is known that during the Fribourg interval thirty-two postulants were received: 15 priests, 1 deacon, 1 seminarian, and 15 laymen. Eight left the novitiate: one priest and seven laymen. That means that twenty-four made their first vows. Of these, two lay-brothers left after the expiration of their temporary vows.

The novitiate in Fribourg was not a monastery, neither in fact nor in name. It was a preparatory residence for postulants to the Order which Father Matulaitis called a House of Studies for reasons of secrecy. Its real purpose was not revealed to the University authorities because prudence indicated that there was no reason for this. In time, the authorities at the University became curious about the nature of the institution. The rector suspected that it was some sort of group of Modernists or Masons of whom there were many at the time. He sent one of the professors to Rome to report his suspicions to the Holy See. It was fortunate that Father Matulaitis in 1909 had explained in detail to Cardinals Vives y Tuto, de Lai, and Merry del Val the nature and the reasons for reviving this religious order secretly when he had petitioned Papal approval. It was to them that the emissary of the rector reported; but because they knew the whole matter, including the reasons for secrecy, they merely asked for proof of the Modernism. This was the end of the whole affair.

The priests who completed their novitiate had no choice but to return to the countries of their origin and submit to local jurisdiction in the various dioceses to engage in the ministry while privately observing their religious obligations. This dispersal of personnel did not fit the plans and hopes Father Matulaitis had for the religious congregation as a community, but there was no hope of establishing a center either in Lithuania or Poland. To be

located in Switzerland or somewhere else in western Europe did not make sense in view of their purpose.

The problem was easy to solve, according to Father Anthony Staniukynas (1865-1918), founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Casimir in Chicago, and its chaplain. He had wanted to join the Marian Congregation and was in correspondence with Father Matulaitis since 1911, inviting him to establish a monastery in Chicago. He wrote: "I think the spacious chaplain's residence next to the Sisters' convent, which I built almost with your needs in mind, will be adequate."

Father George Kolesinskas, one of the old white Marians and pastor of St. George parish in Chicago, arranged for a donation of $5,000 for the construction of the chaplain's house. He was overjoyed when he found out about the revival of the Order, and immediately exchanged his white habit for a black cassock.

After much deliberation and consultation, Father Matulaitis decided to go to America and establish a house for the Marians there. He and two other professed Marians, Father Felix Kudirka (1870-1932), and Father Julian Kazakas (1886-1960), left Le Havre on the "Ile de

Father Felix Kudirka (1870-1932) and Father Julian Kazakas (1886-1960) were the first Marian Fathers in America

France" on July 12, 1913 and arrived in New York on July 19.

During a short stay in New York they met with the Lithuanian priests of the area and arrived in Chicago on July 22. Shortly, they had an audience with Archbishop Edward Quigley who received the new missionaries very cordially. Father Matulaitis presented his credentials, explained the purpose of their mission, and asked permission for the Order to work in the diocese. Permission was readily given along with the promise that one of the Lithuanian parishes would be given to the Marians.

Although Father Matulaitis had intended only a brief stay in America, he took advantage of the permission and immediately began a priestly ministry. He conducted a ten-day retreat for the Sisters of St. Casimir, preached in various Lithuanian churches, heard confessions, etc. Because he was experienced in religious life, he was able to review the Sisters' constitution and suggest a few changes. At the same time he lectured on Catholic social questions and went wherever his help was needed.

Finally, a historic event took place. On August 18, 1913 the first monastery of the new Marian Congregation was formally established in Chicago. Temporarily, it was in the residence of Father Staniukynas. Father Kudirka was appointed Superior and Father Kazakas, First Consultor. The constitution required two consultors, so Father Staniukynas became Second Consultor. This appointment was not changed even after the arrival of more Marian priests. On that same day Father Matulaitis left for New York to participate in the convention of the Lithuanian R.C. Priests' League of America, and then to return to Fribourg.

Archbishop Quigley kept his promise and appointed the Marian Fathers to administer St. Michael's parish on the north side of Chicago. The parish had been established in 1904, but was in poor straits because of a huge debt and poor management.

Father Kudirka was appointed pastor on November 13, 1913, and Father Kazakas was his associate together with

the duties of Novice Master for the prospective postulants. The parish suited the Marians well because the rectory was spacious enough not only to house the priests, but also the postulants.

Quite soon the Marian Fathers imparted new vigor to the parish. A grammar school for children, evening classes for adults were begun. Both were administered by Father Kudirka. The pastor also organized parish societies and edited a bi-weekly periodical "Faith and Morals." The pastors of Lithuanian parishes took notice of the Marian Fathers' activities and invited them to conduct retreats and parish missions, and to preach at the Forty Hours devotions and on special occasions. The two priests were not able to carry this work-load so they asked the Superior General for help. Father Kulikauskas arrived from Switzerland in 1915, and after the closing of the Institute in St. Petersburg, Father Bucys came in 1916.

* * *

When he returned, Father Matulaitis wrote his impressions of Lithuanians in America, and in general about life in the United States:

> When I went to America I conducted a retreat for the Sisters of St. Casimir and fulfilled some of my obligations. There are more than enough negative criticisms of the Lithuanians in America, so I want to relate only the good among them that I noticed. It is true that I didn't have much time and that I was busy with serious matters. It is true also, that I stayed mainly in Chicago and Brooklyn and did not have the opportunity to visit more widely, but I brought back impressions that I feel are typical of every Lithuanian settlement.
>
> It is evident that Lithuanians are quick to take advantage of cultural opportunities. Lithuanian emigres in the cities of the United States are no longer impoverished and subdued peasants. They look like people of the upper classes. Not only do they dress well, but their manners and behavior are noticeably refined. There are many who strive to get an education, at least in the evening when they are free of their jobs. And they do get educated because the opportunities are greater.

> In some cases their hard-earned money goes to the taverns for beer and whisky, but there are very many who know how to save their pennies and buy homes and businesses. From my conversations with the Lithuanians there, it is evident that they live in freedom. Their faces are not taut; they reflect confidence, confidence in self and their abilities. Jobs were plentiful, so it was not too difficult to earn a living. Naturally, under those circumstances a good mood prevailed. I was told that those who work in coal mines do not have as many opportunities for self-improvement. But, in general, if we compare the lot of our emigres in Russian cities to that of our people in the United States, we must conclude that in every aspect the standards of living are better for the latter.
>
> Our people in the United States are very generous. They build and maintain their own schools and churches, and support the Sisters of St. Casimir, often at great sacrifice to themselves. And they have not forgotten their motherland. They are generous toward our cultural and other institutions.
>
> Reflecting on the American Lithuanians, a concern arises: What is to happen to the future generations of our people? Will they disappear in the Anglo-American ethos? Will they lose their national identity?

Father Matulaitis answers that in this matter much will depend on having their own schools, good schools conducted in a Catholic atmosphere which will be the best support for religion and their ethnicity. He added that since the Sisters of St. Casimir are preparing precisely for this, they are to be supported and encouraged.

The energy and activity of the Lithuanian clergy was specially noted. They had to maintain churches, pay off debts and find money to establish and maintain schools. They were also energetic in forming societies for their people and monitoring them. They were involved in cultural pursuits: lectures, concerts, and little theaters. For all this, auditoria had to be provided. Apart from this, they also support the Catholic Lithuanian press, send personal donations to Lithuania and provide scholarships for university students.

Chapter 8

Warsaw — World War I — Vilnius

As the Marian priests completed their novitiate in Fribourg, they departed one after another, like fledglings leaving their nest. Father Matulaitis, friend and mentor, gave each as a parting gift the reminder of three basic principles that would serve them best in their future work: all-encompassing humaneness, cheery optimism, and serene spirituality. They returned to their dioceses which were still under Russian oppression. Their religious obligations would have to be fulfilled in private and unseen. No one was able to foretell how long this situation would persist.

In the general picture of Europe it was obvious to the perceptive eye that storm clouds were gathering on international horizons. Top-heavy Russian imperialism and expanding Slavism threatened the Germans and their territories. The general political atmosphere was being Balkanized. The unrest in the Balkan countries was a keg of dynamite that could explode at any moment.

Although Father Matulaitis was not unduly concerned with political affairs, he felt the approaching catastrophe. In his search for a stable site for the Marians and their mission to serve their own nationals, he turned his gaze away from the volcanic atmosphere of Europe to the United States of America, the land of many freedoms where extensive settlements of Polish and Lithuanian immigrants already existed. The uncertainties in Europe were the principal reason for his move there.

When he returned, the Marian novitiate already occupied more spacious quarters in Rue Grande Fontaine. His impressions of life in the United States became a frequent topic of conversations with members of the community. He remarked often that the harmony among three nationalities in Switzerland was a matter of wonder for them, and yet there were sixty distinct nationalities living in peace in the United States despite the hard work and competition necessary to make progress for oneself. He pointed out that the optimism and good-will so prevalent there was due in great part to the conviction among the population that it was hard work and benevolence that made for success, rather than the jealousies and strife so noticeable in the Old World.

The novitiate in Fribourg was growing year by year; there were more and more postulants and novices, priests and laymen. This was a joy to Father Matulaitis, but here too the words of Christ applied: "Many are called, but few are chosen." Some of the priests became Marians, others chose to remain seculars and return to their bishops. Some laymen returned to their former occupations. Father Matulaitis was very understanding of this, and each, priest or layman, received his warm fatherly blessing on leaving. The Order needed only those graced for unconditional dedication.

From among the more than twenty novices who were in Fribourg just before the war, Father Matulaitis singled out Brother Anthony Sivickas, whom he called "our Lithuanian Stanislaus Kostka."

Brother Sivickas entered the novitiate in 1913, graduated from St. Michel College in Fribourg, and returned to Lithuania in 1920. He taught Latin and French in the high school at Mariampole, was prefect in the boarding school, and for a time was editor of a periodical "Saltinis" — Fountain. Brother Anthony died in 1931 at the young age of 34 after a long siege of tuberculosis. He was a true reflection of the spirit of Father Matulaitis.

In July of 1914, Bishop Anthony Karosas arranged for

Father Matulaitis to give a retreat for the Lithuanian priests in the diocese of Seinai. This was the eve of World War I, which actually broke out in August. The retreat, as usual, was of deep spiritual content; possibly more so because of the war. Father Justin Staugaitis, a high school classmate who hadn't met Father Matulaitis since those days, was one of the retreatants. He wrote about this retreat:

> We were truly amazed at Father George's development of thought and his deep insight into the spiritual life. This retreat was a good preparation for the trials of the war.

It is understandable that Father Matulaitis was concerned about the Order now that the war was upon them, so he decided to hurry back to Switzerland. The western border of Lithuania was already in the war zone; therefore, he decided to go by way of Kaunas, Vilnius, and Warsaw. He reached Warsaw and got no farther because every exit was blockaded. He remained there for the four years of the war and communicated with Fribourg only by mail. Switzerland was a neutral country, so the mails were not affected.

In Warsaw Father Matulaitis lived in the Countess Plater's boarding school and made occasional trips to Chyliczki. He was no stranger in Warsaw. There he found his confrere and friend, Archbishop Alexander Kakowski, the former Rector of the Institute in St. Petersburg. He was soon engaged in pastoral ministry: he conducted retreats, was active in priests' organizations, lectured widely, and devoted much time to works of charity. His knowledge and talents in all these fields were necessary and welcome.

After one retreat for intellectuals which he conducted together with Father Szelagowski and Archbishop Teodorowicz, he was congratulated and thanked for his unusually inspiring thoughts and presentation by the retreatants. He answered his well-wishers: "I didn't do anything unusual, I merely taught the catechism."

He was also invited to conduct a retreat at the diocesan seminary of Warsaw. The professors, along with the seminarians, were inspired by the clarity and simplicity of his conferences and the spirit they produced. One of the seminarians, John Sobczyk, recalls that his conferences on holiness were so revelatory of new insights that they not only listened avidly but also made notes of his thoughts and resolutions. The Spiritual Director of the seminary even asked this student for his notes.

The Archbishop assigned the small church of the Infant Jesus which was on Moniuszko Street in the heart of Warsaw to the Marian Fathers. It was made available as the parish church for the Lithuanians of the city. Father Leo Kulvietis was appointed pastor, and occasionally Father Matulaitis went there to give spiritual conferences to young people. That church at one time had belonged to Duchess Magdalen (Radziwill) Radvila, a generous benefactress and patron of the Lithuanian community. She turned over the church and auditorium to the Lithuanians and supported them by giving generous gifts to their cultural and educational organizations. The first of the Lithuanian pastors was Father Anthony Petrauskas, and later Father Linartas. When the Polish youth began to assemble there during Father Kulvietis' pastorate, the duchess made it clear that this was a church for Lithuanians.

Father Matulaitis kept in close touch with the novitiate. Father Wisniewski was Director, and on one occasion he wrote to the Superior General about the advisability of accepting Father Stephen Warszawski whom he had met in Lausanne and Zurich, and with whom he had become quite friendly. This priest was sixty years old and in poor health, but he wanted to join the Order. As would a true general, Father Matulaitis answered directly and tersely: "Accept him. The virtues of a veteran are more sturdy than those of a young recruit."

Father Warszawski completed his novitiate in Fribourg, made his profession of vows, and became a close co-worker

with Father Matulaitis in Bielany. For another twenty years he was able to serve the Congregation very ably. This was living proof that Father Matulaitis did not err and that he had the God-given gift of special insight.

* * *

Bielany is about eleven miles north of Warsaw, on the left bank of the Vistula river. In the 17th century a monastery of Camaldolese monks had been established in the beautiful forest near the town. These monks were famous as spiritual directors and confessors. After the 1863 uprising, the monastery was closed and only two monks were left to take care of the parish of Bielany. In 1902-3, the Russians appropriated the monastery with the intention of making it an Orthodox church, and the Catholics were forced to go to the neighboring parishes. The prior of the monastery, and the last of the Camaldolese, Father Florian Marczewski, moved to Warsaw and was cared for by the nuns near St. Augustine's church until his death in 1910.

The Russians erected a military training center in the vicinity of Bielany and built wooden barracks in the forest. After ten years of negotiations the Catholics regained their church, neglected and run-down, and revived the parish. After some repairs had been made in the church the war soon began and the Germans occupied Warsaw in the summer of 1915. They did not interfere with ecclesiastical matters, so the long-time Russian proscription of Catholic religious orders ended. The Archbishop of Warsaw assigned the parish of Bielany to the Marians, and Father Casimir Bronikowski (1877-1950) was appointed pastor. Archbishop Kakowski did this as a favor to Father Matulaitis.

The whole complex was practically in ruins. It was necessary to clean and re-build so that suitable quarters be made for the priests, brothers, novices and postulants, and some two hundred orphans of the area. The cells of the

Church at Bielany where Father George founded Marian monastery in 1915

monastery were occupied by war-invalids and their families. The Warsaw city council assigned the care of the orphans and the invalids to Father Matulaitis. He had connections with the charitable institutions in Warsaw, and his first concern was to find more suitable facilities for the war-invalids. Some of the more disgruntled among them charged that he "swept" them out of Bielany. This was not the case, because he had in mind only their welfare. They would receive better care in Warsaw than in depressed Bielany.

Now, the protector of orphans was able to concentrate

on the care of these, the most deprived of children. Some of the abuses that had crept in while the invalids and their families resided there were eliminated, so that the simpler needs of the children, bread and potatoes, clothing and shoes, and a warm room, received his full attention. Day after day he traveled by wagon in the cold weather of Warsaw to collect and bring back provisions, fuel, and warmer clothing for the children.

Exhausted, but happy, he returned with his booty, oblivious to the biting cold; feeling only the warmth of his love for God and for his unfortunate little ones.

The needs in caring for the wards of Bielany required many hands and many kinds of dedicated energy. This kind of help could come only from nuns whose lives were consecrated to this kind of service. There were a few such congregations in Warsaw known to Father Matulaitis from his pre-war spiritual ministrations among them as they operated in secrecy. When he requested their assistance, they responded gladly and all sent several of their nuns.

The first of the nuns were from the Franciscan Congregation of Mary's Family who took on the menial tasks of cleaning and house-work. An association of women skilled in the domestic arts called themselves "The Christian Needleworkers Society", most likely to cover their true identity. They were later known as the Sisters of the Holy Name. These were given the task of teaching sewing and dressmaking to the girls.

The directress of the orphanage was Sister Maria Ursula Herman of German heritage. In the certification for her position, Father Matulaitis added her title of Countess. It seems that this title had a magical effect on civil officials. She accompanied him as interpreter whenever he had business with the German authorities, despite the fact that he was fluent enough in that language. In November of 1916, the commissariat was given to Sister Ceslaus Hedwig Maciejewski.

The food department was put into the hands of Sister Lucyna Kropiwnicki. Father Matulaitis wanted the nuns in

the kitchen to wear white aprons and headgear, so he had the sewing department make them up. On one visit to the kitchen he told the nuns approvingly that they looked like real chefs.

The shortage of food and fuel was always a big problem, not only for the orphans, but generally among the people. The individual whom people called priest and professor took it upon his own person to travel, sometimes on foot, to the various relief agencies for provisions. The Marian novices and postulants were edified to see their Superior General, a man of such learning and position,

Father George at Bielany

personally distributing potatoes to needy neighbors, helping tear down the wooden barracks for fuel, clearing the underbrush and levelling the terrain, preparing vegetable gardens and helping plant 300 fruit-trees in the orchard.

The picture of this patient and long-suffering priest/professor, bargaining and haggling with German officials to obtain food and other needs for his orphans, and riding happily on the wagon with a load of provisions, remained for a long time in the memories of those who saw him. They also saw him standing patiently in long lines of applicants for food and fuel requisitions. They saw and heard how exasperated clerks did not hesitate to scold and ridicule him.

Two of these incidents were widely related among the people. One clerk berated him: "You are a priest and it would be better if you trusted Divine Providence more and stopped bothering me." "This is true," Father Matulaitis replied quietly, "but Providence uses good people." Lowering his head, the clerk quickly wrote out the order. On the other occasion, a clerk began to scold him and used abusive language. When he finished his tirade, the priest calmly responded: "That was for me; now how about my two hundred orphans?" Silently the requisition, plus a bonus, was issued.

The physical work of preparing and maintaining Bielany exhausted both Father Matulaitis and the novices. Father Sobczyk remembers:

> Humanly speaking, the work was hard, very hard, because we tried to out-do the Superior. At times we were so tired that we fell asleep during spiritual reading and even at the table. The superior was also very tired. Occasionally he took a nap for a few minutes and claimed that he was rested. It is difficult to understand how he remained so vigorous, because he still kept his custom of arising at four o'clock.

It became necessary to provide some livestock for Bielany, especially suckling pigs. It was impossible to buy any, and to transport some from the Countess Cecilia's

farm presented serious problems because of war-time restrictions. Louise Ropp decided to brave it. She was the countess' niece and later a witness in the process of beatification. She and her aunt went to the farm in Chyliczki and put some piglets into a sack, which they covered with a robe and placed under foot in their horse-drawn cart as they set out for Bielany. They were terrified that the piglets might squeal at the two check-points along the road, but they reached Bielany safely and without further incident.

In the fall of 1917, the Duchess Woroniecki turned over the Mankowski boarding-school for poor boys to the Marians. The building was located in the Warsaw suburb of Praga, on Wilenska Street. Father Ladislaus Lysik was named supervisor.

The institution at Bielany soon became not only habitable but also attractive, thanks to the untiring efforts and dedication of Father Matulaitis. On this perimeter of war-torn Warsaw, the first Marian monastery in Poland was established. For a time the Renovator and Superior General was superior of the house which became a central gathering place for the Order. Soon, besides the orphanage, a grammar school and high-school were set up, and the facilities became so crowded that the girls' trade school had to be moved elsewhere. Father Matulaitis became a legend in Warsaw. A proclamation by the Magistrate of Warsaw still exists, which states:

> It is hereby declared that the honorable Priest Professor Father George Matulaitis has been selected unofficial member of the City Council and a member of the Child-Care Committee.

An added note explains that this position is accorded persons who are outstanding in philanthropic works and who allocate much of their time to improving the lot of poor and homeless children.

A general meeting of priest teachers of religion from all of Poland was held June 20-23, 1917. Father Matulaitis

was unanimously voted its chairman. The event was very significant for the Catholics of Poland.

As various problems and discussions came to the floor, the chairman quickly and efficiently decided their importance and worth. For example, in the question on textbooks, one of the priests from Warsaw proposed that only a minimum of the Old Testament be taught. Another priest from the same city vehemently held the contrary. Their exchange became so heated that it eroded to name-calling, and the author of the proposal was denounced as a heretic. The situation was getting out of hand with irrelevant argument.

The chairman intervened and cautioned them, gently, and kindly, that they were assembled in fraternal concerns; and that all had the right to express their opinions. He added a touch from his personal experience that the accusation of error in doctrine by a brother-priest was one of the most hurtful to bear. This comment had an effect on the whole audience, and soon there was peace. The two opponents apologized and became reconciled.

As the meeting closed, the participants and Archbishop Kakowski expressed their thanks to Father Matulaitis for his exemplary chairmanship. Pope Benedict XV sent his blessing to all those present and, to commemorate this meeting, "Pamietnik," a book of 347 pages was published in Warsaw.

After taking care of the monastery in Bielany, Father Matulaitis left on March 1, 1918 for Lithuania to restore the old monastery of the Marians in Mariampole in preparation for moving the novitiate back from Fribourg and to make it the center for Lithuanian priests and brothers of the Order.

* * *

The Marian Congregation came into being in the last quarter of the 17th century in Poland and later expanded into Lithuania. For that reason its members were, in the main, natives of these countries. When the Russian

government suppressed Catholic religious congregations in 1864, all of the Marians, Poles and Lithuanians, were consigned to the monastery of Mariampole, there to disappear through attrition. When Father Matulaitis revived the Order, his intention was that it remain a Lithuanian-Polish community as the special needs of the times required; but that in the future it be open to all nationalities as were other religious communities.

When this became known to the Lithuanian secular priests, some expressed doubts and wrote to the Renovator that such a community was impossible because nationalistic ideologies and feelings would make living in harmony questionable. One of these was Father John Totoraitis, spiritual director of Seinai seminary, and later one of the three original members of the renewed Marian Congregation. Because this was a delicate question, Father Matulaitis wrote him a long letter on January 8, 1913, in which he explained his stand on nationality relations:

> I have been intending for some time to discuss with you the matters you have written about in your letters, namely, nationality relations in our Congregation. This was, and still is, a matter of grave concern to me. For that reason I gave it much thought and consulted others about it. I have prayed for guidance, that we don't take the wrong step and veer too far in one direction or another. I am still praying because I have suffered much from reproaches and gossip about that very thing. Aside from myself, others have been injured.
>
> I trust that God will accept these sufferings and will help us find the true way. We don't lack for good will, and God does reward good will. It is good that you are concerned about this matter.
>
> The religious should be a person who exemplifies, serves, defends, and preaches supernatural life and all that makes it up. The universal Church is our Mother. Her trials and sufferings, her concerns and anxieties, her joys and happiness must be ours. Our first duty is to serve the Church, and if need be, suffer and die for her. There is only one thing we should fear: that having done nothing for the glory of God, for the Kingdom of God on earth, we somehow glide through this life like a shadow.
>
> I am at a loss for words to describe the love I would like to have for our holy mother, the Church, and to be able to inculcate it

in the hearts of others. The Church has ever gathered under her wings the diverse nations of the earth, and continues to do so. It seems to me that this same love of Christ and his Church can unite and reconcile people of various nationalities even in our Congregation. There is enough room for all; there is enough work for all of us. It remains only that we do it; that we do not forget that our purpose is not worldly politics nor to judge nations and become involved in their disputes. We gather as a community, not to solve such problems, but only to labor for the salvation of souls.

In his letter he touches on political relations between nations and on nationalistic relations in the large congregations like the Jesuits, Franciscans and others which are made up of people of many different nationalities. He says:

I believe in the power of ideals, especially in the power of the ideals of Christ and the Church. You write, brother, that quite often people know how to hurt and exploit each other under the pretext of lofty and holy idealism. This is the most contemptible and dastardly desecration of an ideal. We are to fear this and detest it. It seems to me that people criticize us because they look upon a religious institution only from the aspect of nationality, and not from the principles taught by Christ and his Church. Although a religious congregation is in this world, it should not be of this world. Its purposes and ideals reach higher and beyond any sphere of earthly endeavor. Because of the fact that a bitter controversy now exists between the Poles and Lithuanians and that many are furiously clashing, some are prone to think that we plan to be involved by creating new partisan factions, etc. We are constantly accused of having become Poles, and even Polish nationalists. We don't identify with Poles or nationalists, but only with Catholics who desire to serve Christ and his Church, be that in Polish or Russian or German.

I agree with you entirely that even as the Germans and the French are equal, so too should be the Lithuanians, Poles and White Russians. Personally, of course, I love mostly my own people, the Lithuanians, and I always did, and I strive to be of some service to them. I felt no special love for the Poles. It makes no difference to me if it be a Pole, a Russian, or a German who seeks my ministration, I serve them all equally. When the need arises I speak with equal kindness in Russian or German as I do in Polish. In my heart they are all equal, and only those among them are closer in whom I see more of Christ's spirit.

Earlier I could not tolerate Jews; and there was a time when I did not tolerate Russians and Poles, but the grace of God has enlightened me and I thank Him for it. I came to be convinced in the depths of my being that this was contrary to Christ's teaching which commands that we love every neighbor as we love ourselves, that we love even our enemies, that we pray for them and do good to them. From that time, thank God, I have rid myself of all intolerance and prejudice. Experience has shown me that everywhere, among all nations, there are truly good people, good devout Catholics, who want to serve God, and with whom it is possible to cooperate. Therefore, we must hold to the principle that we unite, not with Poles, not with nationalists, but only with Catholics of all nationalities for God and Church.

We do not, thereby, renounce our love of country. According to St. Thomas, patriotism "pertinet ad virtutem pietatis," and is a potential part of the virtue of justice. Therefore, in our attempts at perfection we cannot ignore this virtue. Here, too, each of us serves his country best by striving first of all to bring Christ's teaching to it. My intention is that our members return to work among their own people; to the place of their origin. Patriotism, in my estimation, can and should be free of intolerance and disdain of other nations. As we love our own, we should be benevolent to others.

* * *

At the turn of the 20th century, the Bishop of Vilnius was Stephen Alexander Zwierowicz (1842-1907). His whole priestly career was spent in Vilnius. He had been rector of the seminary and a Capitular Canon of the diocese. When Bishop Anthony Audzevicius died in 1896, Pope Leo XIII appointed Zwierowicz Bishop of Vilnius in 1897. He was very pro-Polish and neglected other nationalities. When people of Lithuanian or mixed parishes requested the appointment of Lithuanian priests, he would brusquely answer: "If you people cannot understand Polish, I will close your churches."

The Lithuanian complaints reached the Metropolitan Archbishop Boleslaus Klopotowski, who ordered Bishop Zwierowicz to assign a church to the Lithuanians in Vilnius. St. Nicholas church and a Lithuanian priest was

given to them in 1901. It might have been that Canon Casimir Prapuolenis (1858-1933), had some influence in this because he had been a secretary of the Metropolitan Curia from 1889 to 1904. On the whole, Bishop Zwierowicz was quite active in the Church of Vilnius. In 1902 he issued a pastoral letter forbidding Catholic parents to send their children to Russian Orthodox schools. For this reason the Russian authorities banished him.

To replace Bishop Zwierowicz, Pope Leo XIII sent Edward von Ropp (1851-1939). As a young man, von Ropp studied law in St. Petersburg and had received his degree. While working in government service, he felt a vocation to the priesthood. In 1879 he entered the Samogitian seminary in Kaunas and later studied at Innsbruck and Fribourg. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1886 by Bishop Paliulionis. He was ordained Bishop of Tiraspol in 1902 and transferred to Vilnius in 1903.

Bishop Ropp's activities in Vilnius were many-faceted, and besides pastoral ministry included social and political works. He issued pastoral letters, convened clergy conferences to discuss diocesan affairs, defended priests who were arrested by the government, performed parish visitations and supported the press. He issued circulars inviting the Orthodox to return to the Catholic Church. In his concern for religious training he prepared guidelines for teaching Catholic doctrine. When the Russian Minister of Education charged that this was done without his permission, the bishop replied in a letter (March 17, 1905) that he had learned from experience that applying to the government for any such sanction was useless and a waste of time.

Bishop Ropp dealt fairly with the Catholics of all nationalities. He directed that a course in the Lithuanian language be established in the seminary; and that sermons, religious instructions, and hymn singing be in the language the people spoke in their homes. In this he demonstrated the true spirit of the Catholic Church which embraces all nations.

Later he seemed to side more with the Poles as a result of Polish chauvinistic pressures. With his permission a Catholic Polish democratic party came into being which chose him as its delegate to the Russian Duma (Parliament). This infuriated the Orthodox clergy who prevailed on the authorities to remove him from Vilnius by the use of administrative measures on October 5, 1907. Protests by the Holy See could not reinstate him.

Eventually, Pope Benedict XV appointed Ropp Archbishop of Mogilev on July 25, 1917. Archbishop Ropp had plans to establish new dioceses in the vast stretches of Russia to to start a concentrated missionary drive to convert Russia to Catholicism. However, all these plans were unrealized because of the bolshevik revolution and the spread of communism. Within his own jurisdiction, it was in vain that he tried to help the Church by organizing committees and protests against the communist regime. On April 29, 1919, the bolsheviks arrested him and condemned him to execution by a firing squad. He was rescued from this by the intervention of Archbishop Ratti, and on November 27 he went to Poland where he lived in Warsaw as Metropolitan of Mogilev until his death on July 25, 1939.

After the removal of Bishop von Ropp from Vilnius, Pope Pius X had no choice but to appoint an Administrator for the diocese. The dean of the clergy of Minsk, Father Casimir Michalkevicius (1865-1940), was selected.

Father Michalkevicius (he used Michalkiewicz) was born in Lithuania of an aristocratic Lithuanian family and had studied in Vilnius and St. Petersburg. He was ordained a priest in 1888 and was a curatè in Vitebsk and later in Latvia in the Latvian-Polish parish of Birzagala. A later assignment was the pastorate in Kronstadt where he worked for seven years and meanwhile took post-graduate courses in St. Petersburg and received his degree. In 1902 he became pastor of Minsk, and in 1908 became a monsignor and was made Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Vilnius.

In his youth he considered himself a Lithuanian and knew the language quite well, but later and especially when he became Administrator his orientation was Polish. Nevertheless, he made efforts that the Lithuanian language be preserved in the churches of his diocese.

Msgr. Michalkevicius' participation in the political move to annex Lithuania to Poland in 1917 did not please the German government of occupation, nor was it consistent with the general policy Germany held toward captured countries. For this reason the German authorities were interested in the problems of the Vilnius diocese. Most likely, it was at the suggestion of these authorities that the Papal Nuncio advised Msgr. Michalkevicius to resign. When he refused, the German authorities banished him to Germany in June 1918, whence he returned only at the end of the war. By that time, by a vote of the Diocesan Capitular Chapter, Msgr. J. Hanusowicz had been elected administrator of the diocese.

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When he had concluded the affairs of his Order in Bielany and Warsaw, Father Matulaitis decided to take charge of the monastery in Mariampole. He wrote a letter to the Bishop of Samogitia, Francis Karevicius, to arrange for a permit to enter Lithuania. During the war years, civilian travel was very restricted and permits were hard to obtain in order to prevent espionage. When he received his permit, Father Matulaitis left Warsaw by train on March 1, 1918. Although there were widespread rumors about the difficulties and hazards of travel, the trip to Vilnius was uneventful. He rode third class and the railroad car was practically empty, except for a few soldiers and Jewish merchants. He reached Vilnius about seven in the evening and stayed with the Dolorist Brothers. Later he called on Msgr. Michalkevicius.

This visit was a complete surprise to Msgr. Michalkevicius. He was very uncomfortable and asked if his

guest had already come to take over the diocese as Administrator. Father Matulaitis was confused and could not understand the question at first. It was explained later that there was a rumor in Vilnius that he was to be appointed Administrator of the diocese.

In surprise, the Monsignor asked his guest if he had not heard anything of this from Archbishop Kakowski in Warsaw. Father Matulaitis quieted his disturbed host by assuring him that he had heard nothing of the kind, and that he was only on his way to conduct retreats and revive the monastery in Mariampole.

The next day he left for Kaunas where he conducted three retreats; one for the seminarians, and two for the people, one in Lithuanian and one in Polish. The city was rather empty. When the war had begun, the commandant of the Russian forces had evacuated all Jews; other refugees had not returned as yet. The streets were full of German soldiers and all the street signs were in German. Bishop Karevicius informed him that the German government had proposed Canon Constantine Olsauskas or Msgr. Alexander Dambrauskas as candidates for the Bishopric of Vilnius; and also that Father Matulaitis' candidacy was being discussed. He was told that this latter proposal had been made by Bishop von Ropp and the Polish bishops who knew Father Matulaitis very well from his activities in Poland and especially in Warsaw.

Father Matulaitis met with obstacles in getting to Mariampole. Because of travel restrictions, he had to apply in person to the German authorities. Mr. von Altmann was the Minister of Religious Affairs in the district. Father Matulaitis explained that he wanted to go to Mariampole to remain there as superior of the monastery and the novitiate. At first, von Altmann said that the Germans had nothing against this, but he began to interrogate the priest at length and in detail. From that conversation Father Matulaitis understood that he had already been thoroughly investigated because of his possible candidacy as bishop of

Vilnius. He was asked to come back later. Father Matulaitis writes:

> When I returned to pick up my permit, von Altmann was unwilling to give it to me for fear that I had come to Lithuania to stir up some trouble. He tried every method to avoid a direct refusal. As a gambit, I was told that I must get written permission from the Bishop of Kielce, consent from the Bishop of Seinai, and further, that I needed the approval of the Council (Lithuania's Assembly), to establish a religious institution. I answered that the Bishop of Seinai, not only welcomed me, but was anxious that I work in his diocese. The permission of the Bishop of Kielce was not necessary since I, as a religious, was under the direct jurisdiction of the Pope. As far as the Council was concerned, this was not their affair because I did not intend to establish a new religious congregation. The Marian Order had existed in Mariampole before and still exists there and its members are assembling again after having been temporarily dispersed.
>
> I demanded quite strongly that he stop obstructing my trip to Mariampole. He replied that he would consult with others and would speak with the Bishop of Kaunas. On the morrow, he issued a permit valid for fifteen days, with the addition that it could be extended at the pleasure of the head of government in Mariampole.
>
> I found out that the Bishop of Kaunas was a strong advocate of my nomination to the Bishopric of Vilnius with German officialdom and also in the Council. I tried in every possible way to convince him that my work for the Order is essential, that I can serve God and the Church much more profitably in this way than I could as bishop, that others were better qualified, and that I am indispensable to the Order at this time.

Father Matulaitis left for Mariampole when he had concluded his business in Kaunas. He does not specify what form of travel he used. At the time there was no railroad between Kaunas and Mariampole. Before the war there had been a stage-coach service, but whether or not it was able to operate that early in the spring is not known. An alternate rout was by train to Vilkaviskis and then a smaller coach to Mariampole.

Whatever the means of his travel, his heart beat faster as he neared his birthplace, fully convinced that he would

devote himself exclusively to the needs of the Order. Still, he was somewhat uneasy about the bishopric.

In Mariampole he began pastoral work without delay. He conducted retreats for students and parishioners. He visited his brother John and sister-in-law Veronica. His birthplace Lugine and the briskly flowing river Sesupe were a most pleasing sight.

The situation at Mariampole was very difficult. There was much work in the parish with only two Marians, Fathers Vincent Dvaranauskas and Justin Navickas, to carry the burden. Some secular priests lived in the monastery. Frequent visitors to the monastery and local clergy conferences took up much of Father Matulaitis' time.

At these meetings the bishop of Kaunas came in for some sharp criticism because the diocese had neither a Chancery Office nor a seminary. Father Matulaitis tried to make peace by reminding them of the difficult times and Canon Law. When the priests suggested that he take on the establishment of a seminary, he refused firmly and told them that he had more than enough work in conducting the affairs of the Order and the novitiate. However, he did assist them in obtaining permission from the German government to revive the seminary of Seinai. He had a way with German authorities because they respected him as a person of high Western culture. The permission was granted with the provision that everything be taught in Latin and Lithuanian. Eventually, Bishop Karosas acceded to the wishes of the priests and promised to organize a Chancery Office. The "Diaria Lituana" continues:

> With God's help we are getting candidates in Mariampole. I have started the actual work of restoration. Many Lithuanian refugee priests are coming back from Russia by way of Mariampole. Some stay here for longer periods of time. Gradually we are establishing a religious routine in the house: spiritual reading at the noon and evening meals, instructions and explanations of the Rule, and even cloister. The seculars have moved into town and we have begun to live the life of religious.
>
> As time allowed, I composed the Constitutions for the Sisters

of the Poor (Sorores Pauperum sub titulo Immaculatae Conceptionis Beatae Mariae Virginis), and this was translated from the Latin to Lithuanian by Father Joseph Laukaitis. I was able to set a regimen for their life.

The Marians in Warsaw wrote to me that the immediate danger of an episcopacy has passed. Now I can devote myself to further work on the Instructions for my Order.

Despite this report from Warsaw, thoughts about his future still disturbed him. Once again he appealed to Bishop Karevicius in a long letter on May 30, 1918:

Your Excellency, I hear that you are still proposing me as a candidate for the See of Vilnius. I am very grateful for your confidence and for your generosity of heart. But after living in Mariampole and after much serious thought, with the Providence of God in mind, I am more and more convinced that I cannot go to Vilnius. Our work here as a religious order is just beginning. We are still trying to get organized, still building anew. For me to leave would be a severe blow. All our work in Mariampole would fall apart and perish. If I leave, there would be no one to supervise the monastery and the novitiate.

I have started work on founding a congregation of nuns here in Mariampole and the Constitution is almost completed. Without me even the Sisters would become disorganized.

Surely it is clear that in Lithuania we are very much in need of religious congregations of men and women. I think that in the future, with Your Excellency's help and the growing numbers of our membership, we Marians will also be able to get established in the diocese of Kaunas. Even if I were to go to Vilnius, there is not much I would be able to accomplish. The Lithuanians, as far as I know, do not trust me; and some are saying outrightly that they do not want me. It is questionable that I would ever be able to satisfy all their demands and wishes. I would be constantly suspected of being partial to the Poles. The Poles, it is true, might want me now, but they would soon be disappointed on seeing that I cannot be partial to them. Without the favor, trust, and satisfaction of the subjects, it would be hard for a bishop to do much.

In Vilnius a battle is brewing with all kinds of political intrigues and entrapments. I would not know how to avoid them. A clever, battle-wise person is needed there; one who would know how to handle demands and other things sternly and sharply. It is precisely this that I cannot do. It is not my nature. I have always

worked as hard as I could, but quietly and peacefully. I have never fought anyone. If I were to fall into the maelstrom of dispute, brawls, and antagonisms in Vilnius, my health would soon give way and I would become helpless. I have been sick so often with bouts of tuberculosis.

Our present work for the Church and our country would suffer, and who knows if I could do any good in Vilnius. Therefore, Your Excellency, please do not recommend me for Vilnius. Allow me to continue on the path that God's Providence has led me and leads me now. On that path I can do so much more for the glory of God, for the Church, and for Lithuania. What I write is not from obstinacy, but the result of much thought and even longer prayers. I feel that God has called me to walk the ways of peaceful, silent work. Turned away from this I can accomplish nothing.

Let someone else take Vilnius. There are people who can do the work there better than I. Therefore, on behalf of the good of the Church, and taking into consideration the will of God which I have always respected and do now respect, please protect me from Vilnius. Allow me to continue along the course clearly indicated by God, and you will realize that I will be much more useful here. Trustworthy priests with whom I have discussed this matter assure me that I should remain and continue the work in Mariampole. Here, though the work is humble, much more will accrue to the good of the Church.

Please take pity on our infant Congregation. I am sure that you would not want religious life here in Lithuania, just now budding, to wither so soon and disappear, possibly forever. As you well see, Your Excellency, religious life in community does not concern too many people, and yet it is so necessary.

I kiss Your Excellency's hands. Your devoted servant in Christ, Father G. Matulaitis.

This letter touched Bishop Karevicius so much that he promised not to press Father Matulaitis' candidacy any farther and to leave the matter up to Divine Providence.

Canon Olsauskas' candidacy for Bishop of Vilnius, although supported by the German government and the Lithuanian Council, was summarily rejected by Rome. In an attempt to sway Rome, the Germans banished Administrator Msgr. Michalkevicius from Vilnius, but this was of no avail. The Lithuanian Council discovered that Rome's candidate was the Superior General of the Marian Order, Father Matulaitis. The Council had been elected by

representatives from all Lithuania convened in Vilnius (September 17-22, 1917). It was the highest governing body of Lithuania. This Council, by a Declaration of Independence on February 16, 1918, proclaimed Lithuania an independent country and designated Vilnius its capital.

The Council knew little of Father Matulaitis who had spent a large part of his life in Poland. It was only in March of 1918 that he had returned to Lithuania. In its desire to know Rome's candidate better, the Council sent two of its representatives, Fathers Petrulis and Purickis to find out what his position would be if appointed bishop of Vilnius. Father Matulaitis writes in his journal that they came to find out if he was a "true Lithuanian." There were other reasons for the visit, as one of the delegates, possibly Father Purickis later wrote:

> In the summer of 1918 we arrived at the Marian monastery where Father Matulaitis resided. We were asked to join him and the community at dinner. Afterward, the three of us went to the orchard for a private conversation in which we explained briefly but directly the purpose of our coming, and awaited his answer. Father Matulaitis with a worried look on his face heard us out without interruption:
>
> > "You want to destroy me?!"
> >
> > "Why?"
> >
> > "Do you think for a moment that the Poles will allow me to work in peace? Do you think they will not take all means to remove me from Vilnius? You must want to sacrifice me!"
> >
> > "The Poles are not as opposed to you as they would be to some other Lithuanian priest. When you were at the Institute in St. Petersburg they respected you and your authority."
> >
> > "That may well be, but remember it is one thing to be a professor in St. Petersburg and an entirely different matter to be bishop of Vilnius. The Poles will not allow a Lithuanian to perform a bishop's duties."
>
> After much arguing and pro-and-con deliberation, Father Matulaitis spoke very thoughtfully: Well, if Lithuania needs my sacrifice, I do not refuse. But know this, your are sending me to my undoing. I do not fear for myself, but I am afraid that nothing will be accomplished by my sacrifice.

From the interview and conversation it became evident that the Lithuanian Council would approve his candidacy for Vilnius, and his distress is seen from his journal:

> When I realized this, I made a hurried trip to Vilnius to confer with the President of the Council, Mr. Anthony Smetona. Once again I outlined all the reasons why my work as a religious would be of greater service to God and humanity. I stressed the importance of religious communities in Lithuania, and also that the Marian monastery at Mariampole might be dissipated by my departure. I insisted that other candidates could be found for the bishopric...
>
> I also made a call on Mr. Erich Zechlin, the German Minister of Political Affairs in Kaunas, and asked that the Germans withdraw their support of my candidacy. I even wrote to the Papal Nuncio, Eugenio Pacelli, in Munich, describing the birth pangs of the Order at present in Mariampole, and asked that I be left there... I had already requested the Marians in Warsaw, Fribourg, and the United States that they write to Rome confirming my description of the needs of the Congregation.

The Marians in Poland answered the plea of their Superior General and wrote to the Papal Nuncio adducing many proofs that Father Matulaitis presently is indispensable for the resurgence of the Order after the many years of suppression by the Russians:

> The personal influence of Father Matulaitis for us Marians in Poland is unique in attracting secular priests to the religious life because none among us can match his knowledge and experience in leading and supervising a religious congregation. And moreover, the great good he has done in reforming other religious communities in Poland would suffer if he were to be made bishop...
>
> Before God and in the light of our consciences we humbly beg Your Excellency that you forward our petition to the Holy Father, that he not take Father Matulaitis from us.

This petition was signed by Marian priests who were superiors of various institutions of the Marian Order: Vladimir Jakowski, Casimir Bronikowski, Sigmund Troszynski, Marian Wisniewski, Joseph Vaitkevicius, Leon Kulvietis, and Ladislaus Lysik.

It seems that the letter was not sufficient for the

Polish Marians. They sent a delegation to Apostolic Visitator Msgr. Ratti to express in person their concern for their Superior General. After their presentation, the Visitator smiled and responded: "All those facts only confirm that we have made the right choice. May that be a comfort to you."

With little hope left that he would be spared the bishopric, Father Matulaitis grasped at the last straw. He writes in his journal:

> The Bishop of Seinai was going to Warsaw and I asked him to take my bill of particulars to the Apostolic Visitator, Msgr. Ratti, explaining the ties that bind me to the Marian community. Also, I decided to go to Munich and personally acquaint the Papal Nuncio with the state of affairs. The Lithuanian Council asked me to explain to him that it had no part in the banishment of Msgr. Michalkevicius to Germany. I did go to Munich, but I left with the impression that the Holy Father would hardly take notice of my explanations.
>
> I think it was October 22 when Father Stanislaus Milkowski, a professor at Vilnius Seminary, brought word from Msgr. Ratti that I had been appointed Bishop of Vilnius, and that it was useless to think that the Holy Father would accept any demurral. I spent a sleepless night and felt the full weight of the burden placed on me. It was hard, but I had to bow to God's will. From my conversation with Father Milkowski, I could tell that my appointment did not please some of the Polish clergy in Vilnius.
>
> Soon, my friend Father Joseph Kukta, came along with delegates of the Lithuanian National Council to offer congratulations. It was necessary to discuss with them arrangements for the up-coming Consecration and Installation. They asked that I be consecrated in Vilnius and that I go there as soon as I receive the Papal Bull. The matter of formal addresses came up and I expressed the opinion that the first of my episcopal addresses be in Polish because Vilnius was mostly Polish, but the Council insisted that my first allocution be in Lithuanian in Lithuanian territory.
>
> I answered that a bishop is appointed not for a state or country, but for the people and that his first duty is to the people and the Church. As a further matter of business they asked that I also address the White Russians in their own language and that the Papal Bull be read in that language as well. I answered that I would give them an answer after consultations.
>
> The word from Warsaw was that the Papal Bull could take

anywhere from two to six months to arrive. Somewhat relieved, I took up my work in the monastery.

On October 18, 1918, the Apostolic Visitator announced to the dean of the Vilnius diocesan chapter, Monsignor John Hanusowicz, that by the appointment of Pope Benedict XV, the Bishop of Vilnius was Father George Matulaitis... According to a report from the chapter, at the moment the appointment was announced in Vilnius, there was a great uneasiness among the people with some murmurs of protest raised against the Holy See.

* * *

Father Matulaitis resigned himself to the inevitable. The entry for November 5 in his journal reads:

I left for Kaunas with the intentions of consulting with the Bishop and attending a meeting of the Catholic Action Center. Two delegates from the Vilnius Diocesan Chapter, Msgr. Weliczko and Canon Uszyllo, caught up with me in Kaunas and extended congratulations from the Chapter. In discussing the program for the ceremonies and the speeches at the ingress, I repeated my intention to give the first address in Polish, despite the pressure of the Council that I give it in Lithuanian. I still was not certain about the address in White Russian.

Both delegates were opposed to this gesture toward the White Russians, especially Msgr. Weliczko, who insisted that any need for this was merely the creation of the Germans because there were no White Russians in Vilnius. I reminded them that the Polish "Vilnius Daily," admits that at least 17% of the residents are White Russians, and I thought some recognition of them would be worthwhile. Finally, I left the arrangements to the Cathedral Chapter because it was the host and I was coming as a guest. I asked that they strive for amity among all nationalities. In parting, the representatives said they did not want my consecration to take place in Vilnius.

On November 11, 1918, I received a telegram from Msgr. Ratti instructing me not to wait for the Papal Bull, but to arrange for my consecration and take over the administration of the diocese without delay. This meant another trip to Kaunas to consult with Bishop Karevicius. It was also my intention to visit Msgr. Ratti in Warsaw personally, because the Cathedral Chapter

might refuse to consider a telegraphic dispatch as sufficient authorization for assuming the diocese. It turned out that the trains were going only as far as Bialystok and that further travel was uncertain. On my return to Mariampole I sent Father Dvaranauskas to Warsaw to obtain the necessary documents. He succeeded.

It was agreed with Bishop Karevicius that the consecration take place in Kaunas on December 1, 1918, and that the ingress be on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8. There were some doubts as to whether the invited bishops could arrive on time because in those turbulent days travel was a matter of chance. We even considered postponement, but there was no assurance that the situation would be any better at a later date, and so we held to the chosen dates.

* * *

With the collapse of the Russian and German empires, many subjugated countries were able to become independent nations. In Lithuania, while still under German occupation, a National Council was formed in Vilnius in 1917. It was this Council which issued an Act proclaiming Lithuanian independence on February 16, 1918, and designating Vilnius as its capital. Simultaneously, the Poles were taking similar steps and they, too, declared their independence in 1918.

When news reached Vilnius that Father Matulaitis was indeed appointed its bishop, Lithuanians were happy. In a meeting of Polish clergy there were mixed emotions. One priest who knew of Father Matulaitis' work in Poland openly expressed satisfaction that it was he and not someone else who was to be their bishop. Another stated that they would regret this appointment because he foresaw that it would be difficult to persuade the new bishop to be partial to their endemic interests, and that it would have been better if some less capable person had been appointed so that it would have been easier to replace such a Lithuanian with a Polish bishop. But the White Russian priests were happy because they expected to have a defender and protector in Bishop Matulaitis.

It was on November 11, 1918 that Father Matulaitis received the Apostolic Visitator's telegram to proceed with the consecration without waiting for the Papal Bull. In those uncertain times it was difficult to ascertain its authenticity, so Father Dvaranauskas was sent to bring back the official document. Signed by Achille Ratti, it read:

> I am authorized to announce to Your Excellency that the Bulls appointing you Bishop are now ready in the Apostolic Office. But, because there is the possibility that they might not be delivered here safely and, secondly, because it is urgent at present that bishops occupy their Sees as soon as possible, His Holiness Pope Benedict XV hereby authorizes Your Excellency to anticipate the Bulls and arrange for immediate episcopal ordination by a Catholic Bishop and to take possession of your designated See after making your Profession of Faith and taking the prescribed Oath and holding to all else required by Canon Law.
>
> Given in Warsaw this twenty-second day of November in the Year of Our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Eighteen.

This document shows the urgency of the time element. December 1 was set for the consecration and December 8 for the ingress. Bishop Anthony Karosas of Seinai and Bishop Sigismund Lozinski of Minsk were to be co-concecrators. But Bishop Karosas was in Lomza for the consecration of Romuald Jalbrzykowski as suffragan, and the Bishop of Minsk could not obtain transportation because all available trains were pre-empted by the German army.

The time was short and Father Matulaitis had to hurry to Kaunas. Escorted by Fathers Vincent Dvaranauskas and Casimir Reklaitis, he left in the early morning of November 29 for the depot in Vilkaviskis. They were on time but the train was two hours late. Two added stops were made to take on water and wood (there was a shortage of coal), and this prolonged the delay. They reached Kaunas quite late. There, some doubted if the ceremonies would take place on time.

The rites of ordination began December 1 at 10 o'clock. Bishop Francis Karevicius of the Samogitian diocese was

Kaunas Cathedral where on December 1, 1918 Father George was consecrated bishop

the ordaining prelate, assisted by Msgr. Bajko and Msgr. Matthew Dabrila. The archdeacon was Msgr. John Maciulevicius-Maironis, rector of the seminary. His assistants were Fathers Casimir Paltarokas and Bronislaus Laus. The document of appointment was proclaimed by a Capitular Canon of Vilnius Karol Lubianiec. The Cathedral was thronged with people, with representatives of various organizations and their banners. Composer Joseph Naujalis was at the organ and the seminary choir sang.

The formal addresses of congratulations began when the Liturgy was completed at 1:00 p.m. These were by government officials, the Lithuanian National Council, Cabinet Ministers, the Seinai Diocesan Chapter, city officials, and more than twenty various organizations.

To all the greetings Bishop George responded at some length: twice in Lithuanian and once each in Polish and Russian. The general theme was peace, charity, and a spirit of humility:

> You are not assembled here because of my person, but because of the ideas I represent which promote the good of humanity here

on earth. One such force is the Church. In my work for the salvation of mankind, I shall serve all equally. In this, I fulfill my duties not only as a bishop, but also as a responsible citizen of this country... The spirit of Christianity will certainly lessen the intolerance among nations... For the Church there is no Greek or Roman, no Jew or pagan... Christ died for all without discriminating between nations, social ranks, ideology, or orientation.

Most Rev. Francis Karevicius, Bishop of Samogitia, consecrated Father George as Bishop of Vilnius

> For that reason it is my duty to serve all mankind, especially the common people from among whom I have been taken and for whom I have been commissioned.
>
> I shall strive to be of assistance to all who are in need of the spirit of Christ... Faith is an important factor in life, and religious ideas have dynamic power. Therefore, I am very pleased that the provisional government of Lithuania supports religion... Let us all educate people that there may be many more positive forces for building and creating; the uneducated need no training for destroying... A worm-infested tree fares poorly even in the most fertile ground, but a sound tree can sink roots in rocky soil and survive.

Bishop George makes only a short entry in his journal about the ceremonies:

> There was a dinner about 6 o'clock in the seminary. Again there were speeches in Lithuanian and Polish. I responded to them, once more holding to the theme of our mission in the Church. I stressed the idea that our motivation must come from the ideals of Christ. Of all the speeches, I chose that of Father Tumas for having expressed my basic thought best: 'We have many priests who are political activists, nationalists, and others of that ilk, but we do not have a priest who is father and shepherd. When we seek such a one as confessor or a retreat master we cannot find one!' His greeting was that I be that father and shepherd, upholding the ideals of the Church and diffusing the spirit of Christ.

Later, the program of the ingress was discussed with Msgr. Bajko and Canon Lubianiec. When Bishop George brought up the language of the addresses, it was agreed that they be in Lithuanian and Polish. There was strong opposition to White Russian, as suggested by the bishop. The reason was, they claimed, that there are no White Russians in Vilnius. The bishop did not make an issue of this but urged the Chapter to give serious thought to reconciling the various nationalities, so there would not be any unpleasantness to mar the occasion.

This entry follows in his journal:

> After the consecration, I remained in Kaunas for the week because it was inconvenient to return to Mariampole. During this time I familiarized myself with episcopal ceremonials and spent

two days with Canon Staugaitis in the quiet of his residence. There I prepared my sermons for the ingress.

Rumor reached me that the Poles were going to use the ingress as an occasion for a nationalist demonstration against which the Germans were strongly opposed, and that there may be a possibly bloody confrontation. I was advised that it would be more prudent that I do not arrive on the morning of the 8th, but take the express train on the 7th which would get me there at 6:00 p.m.

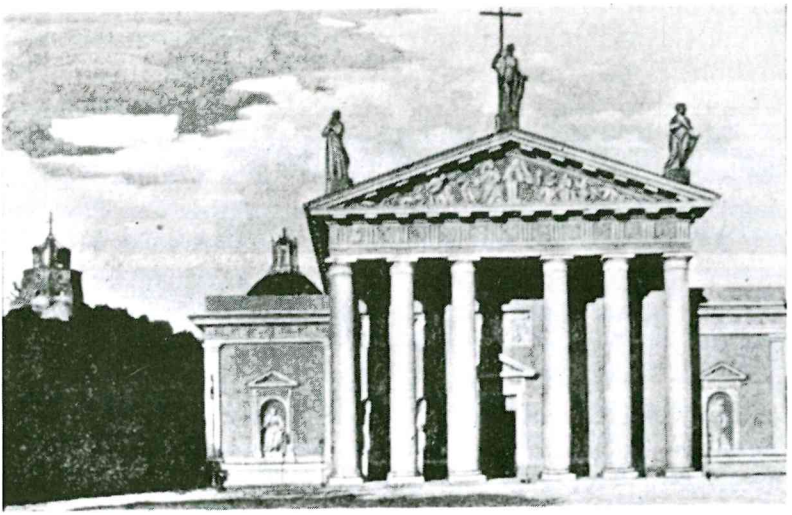
I sent a note to Msgr. Michalkevicius asking that he explore the rumor, because, I suspected some kind of political infighting. I asked him to report to me. Regardless, my intention still was to arrive on the morning of the 8th. The Chapter informed me that there was no substance to the rumor and that the arrival time was only a suggestion by the Germans in order to provide me with a private compartment. On the morning of the 8th, there was no private compartment, and there was also difficulty in obtaining tickets for our group.

On our arrival at Vilnius, I was met at the station by a delegation from the Chapter, the Lithuanian National Council, and city officials. We stopped in the small chapel of Our Lady of the Dawn Gate where Msgr. Wolodzko gave a short welcoming address in Polish. Later we recited the Loretto Litany of the Blessed Virgin after which the people in the street sang "Under Your Protection" in Polish. I responded with a few words in Polish.

I was given a letter from Mr. Augustine Voldemaras, president of the Lithuanian Council, which I shared in the sacristy with Msgr. Hanusowicz and Msgr. Wolodzko. The letter demanded that the representatives of the Council and government officials be given first place for the welcoming addresses. If this were not done, then they would not participate. Another injunction was that I address the White Russians in their language... Msgr. Hanusowicz told me that it was the unanimous decision of the Chapter that I do not speak in White Russian, and that even the reading of the document was not necessary because there wasn't even one parish where that language was used. If I insisted, he continued, then the document could be read, but he warned that there could be undesirable results.

* * *

An ingress is the solemn reception of a bishop, his entry into his Cathedral, and the official taking of office. This ceremony has been practiced for centuries. It is a kind



Cathedral of Vilnius — frontal view

Cathedral of Vilnius — lateral view

of enthronement with prayers and ecclesiastical rites. The ceremonies ordinarily include expressions of homage and happiness at his arrival.

What happened at Vilnius was somewhat different. Polish chauvinism was rampant and, as was intimated at the consecration, the preparations at Vilnius were made

not so much for a solemn and joyous inaugural of a bishop of the Catholic Church as for a grudging acceptance of a possible Polish foe. Bishop Matulaitis always esteemed patriotism for the virtue it is and was against the belittling of other nationalities. This was well known to the Apostolic See when it appointed him bishop of a vast area with people of many nations and diverse tongues.

As we have already seen, he was indeed a man of truly universal apostolic character. A true Lithuanian, he spent so much of his energy for the Polish nation. In Warsaw his apostolic activities among the Polish workers, the youth, and the educated, were outstanding. His lectures on sociology were delivered in Polish both in the city and at the Institute in St. Petersburg. During World War I his philanthropic work in Warsaw was recognized and acclaimed by the civil authorities. Much of his work in reviving the Marian Congregation was done in Poland. The religion teachers of Poland in 1917 elected him their mentor and leader. And yet the Chapter in Vilnius was readying the first Station of his Way of the Cross, instead of preparing a celebration befitting his merits and accomplishments.

An incident from the ceremonies of the ingress illustrates the prevailing atmosphere and is contained in Bishop George's journal:

> As we arrived at the Cathedral, Msgr. Michalkevicius and the priests met me at the portals with the traditional brief formality. After donning the episcopal robes, I began the inaugural ceremony. The audience crowded the church and overflowed into the streets. I spoke briefly in Latin from the bishop's throne to the priests and then from the pulpit gave a sermon, first in Polish, then in Lithuanian. The assisting Canon read the Gospel before the first sermon, but only in Polish.
>
> When I finished the Polish sermon, I asked if the Gospel would be read in Lithuanian. The answer was that there was no such custom here. It seemed to me that it was proper before a Lithuanian sermon to read the Gospel in Lithuanian. Be that as it may, I began the Lithuanian sermon without further comment. The sermons were a fervent and sincere appeal to the people. It seemed that both the Polish and Lithuanian people were satisfied.

From the description of the preparations one can see how the demands of the Poles and the requests of the Lithuanians created a touchy conjuncture. The situation was electric; an explosion in the Cathedral might have occurred at any moment. The Poles had carefully isolated the Lithuanians and had drilled their own faction. The next move, to press the button, was in the Chapter's hands.

Not having full confidence in their new bishop, two escorts followed him to the pulpit, Canon Anthony Czerniawski and Father Stanislaus Maciejewicz. The latter was a renowned activist in the Polish Nationalist Party, a member of the Polish Congress, and previously a delegate to the Russian Duma. On the surface, this escort was a proper gesture of respect, but it made for a strategic command post behind the Bishop's back to signal for applause and approbation when he spoke favorably, or also to signal for an outburst of rowdy disapproval for anything unfavorable.

The Bishop was unperturbed. Nationalistic prejudice and political rivalries were alien to him. Brotherly love was the general theme of his inaugural sermons which were the same word for word in both Polish and Lithuanian. A few excerpts follow:

> The Holy Father has appointed me Bishop and shepherd of this illustrious diocese. On this first occasion I stand before you in this holy temple to speak openly and publicly with you, my dear brethren, on how we shall live together, on how we shall work together for the salvation of souls and fulfill our obligations. I stand before you, unknown. So first of all, I ask you one thing: to consider me as Christ's servant sent to you to show you the way to heaven and to lead you to eternal happiness. From this day we shall live as one large spiritual family, where I shall be father and guide in this spiritual journey...I shall strive to be mediator and defender of my sheep with God.
>
> I shall teach you to know God, Christ, and the Church. I shall remind you of the commandments of God and the Church. I shall teach morality and root out immorality. I shall spread love, truth, temperance. I shall confer God's graces through the Sacraments... Great responsibilities await me and I shall devote my health and all

my energies to meet them. I want to be nothing more than your father and shepherd; a follower of Christ. The exclusive field of my work is Christ's kingdom on earth — the Church. My party is — Christ.

I greet all here present and those at home, the just and the sinners. I come to you with love, and I have no doubt that you will give me love in return.

* * *

As Msgr. Hanusowicz and I were returning to the Bishop's House after Mass, I asked him again to tell Canon Lubianiec to give the Lithuanian Council and government representatives precedence at the reception. I felt that this would eliminate much unpleasantness. As we entered the Bishop's residence, Msgr. Michalkevicius performed the traditional ceremony by greeting me with presents of bread and salt as a gesture of hospitality. Other monsignors and canons arrived. Representatives of various delegations were directed to parlors on the upper floor.

On my way to a late breakfast, Canon Kukta approached me and said that despite the slight the Lithuanian Council had been shown in the Cathedral, its representatives would attend if the Chapter agreed that they head the reception line. I told him that Msgr. Hanusowicz did not object, and a chauffeur was sent to bring them.

As we sat down, Canon Lubianiec sharply protested the desire of the Council and insisted that their decision to allow the Polish delegations to give their welcoming addresses first should be allowed to stand. I said that in my opinion this is a matter of civil protocol. I reminded him that in the Cathedral I spoke first in Polish and then in Lithuanian because more Polish were in attendance. The reception, I continued, is more of a civil affair and the Lithuanian Council is the legal governing body and should be given precedence. This Council as a governmental head had been greeted by the Pope; the Papal Nuncio Pacelli in Munich had negotiated with it; the Germans had ceded it authority; and it spoke for those who made up a sizeable part of the whole country. Consequently, it should be accorded priority as civil protocol requires. The other members of the Chapter did not protest, but Canon Lubianiec insisted that I hurry to the delegations which were already waiting...

Two o'clock was the hour set for gathering. The Council representatives had not yet arrived. I waited for a half-hour and then approached the assembled delegations. I left instructions that I

be called as soon as the Council members arrived and that I would meet them immediately. Canon Lubianiec suggested that I meet them separately in one of the smaller parlors, and I replied that it would be better not to receive them at all than to insult them.

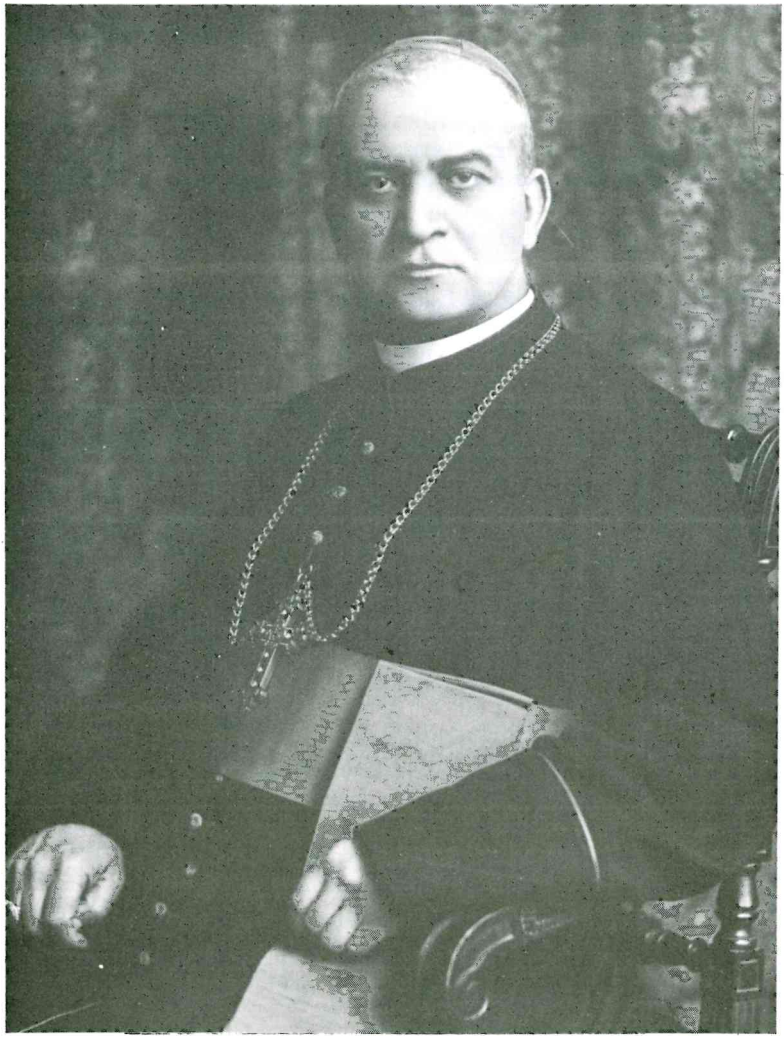
The welcoming speeches began: first, the Poles, then the Lithuanians and White Russians. Canon Lubianiec wanted me to make my formal response immediately after the Poles had spoken, but I said that I would respond after all had made their presentations. I then spoke with equal cordiality to the Poles in Polish, to the Lithuanians in their language, and in Polish to the White Russians because I did not know their language. In each case I stressed my intention to be of equal service to all and to love all. I spoke about harmony among nationalities, about applying to nations the same Christian morality expected among individuals, etc.

I had not realized until now just how meaningless were those tensions among nationalities; their intolerance, their obstinacy. It would seem that with some good-will and a spirit of reconciliation, Christian harmony could prevail. Much of the blame, I felt, belonged to certain priests. I discovered that it was the Chapter and the Polish priests who were in the fore-front in not recognizing the Council and the provisional Lithuanian government. I found out that in Vilnius for two weeks they had done hardly anything else except discuss and argue about which language I would use first, and that if I dared to speak first in Lithuanian, the Poles would create a great disturbance in the Cathedral. It was little comfort to me that they were satisfied that I had spoken first in Polish.

The representatives of the Lithuanian Council did not arrive at all. It seems there had been some misunderstanding. The chauffeur returned and claimed that he had gone to their headquarters, waited for a while, but that nobody showed up. Nor was the Council represented in the Cathedral since they had not been given proper recognition but had been assigned places in the presbytery with representatives of other societies.

How painful and how sad that a bishop of such exquisite sensitivity and all-encompassing charity had to make such notations about one of the most solemn and important days of his life. The Chapter truly put a crown of thorns on his head.

The intrigues of the Chapter spoiled the mood of the inaugural and strained relations with the Council so much



Most Rev. George Matulaitis, Bishop of Vilnius

that Bishop Matulaitis called on the Council's President, his aides, the Cabinet Ministers and other prominent officials on the very next day. He explained that the Chapter had been in charge of all arrangements, and that he had to follow its program just to keep peace.

On that same day, December 9, the Polish citizenry

hosted a luncheon for the Bishop. The Master of Ceremonies toasted the Bishop's health and expressed the hope that he would assist them in re-establishing the Polish-Lithuanian State. This was political provocation to which the Bishop replied in his speech by stating that while he lived in Poland he served its people wholeheartedly, and that he would do the same here. As a priest and bishop he can proclaim only love, brotherhood and unity among all peoples; and that any kind of political union is not his concern and is not in his power to establish. Therefore, he stated, he was unable and unwilling to give any answer in this matter.

The next day the Christian Democrats invited him to a formal dinner. There were, again, many speeches; and it was necessary for him to be cautious because he sensed the air of political maneuvering. He emphasized in his response that the Bishop serves the nation best by staying out of politics and teaching his people the doctrines of Christian morality. In his journal we read:

> The Lithuanian National Council and government officials, somewhat mollified, invited me to a State reception on December 12. There were welcoming speeches from the Lithuanians, White Russians, Poles, Jews, and members of various political parties. I replied to some separately and addressed all of them in my concluding speech. This gave me opportunity to deliver two sermonettes on the ideals of Christ and his teachings. My words seemed to impress all of them. With the help of God I was able to become reconciled with the provisional Lithuanian government.

An article in "Lietuvos Aidas" by its editor, Canon Tumas, describes this luncheon:

> The speeches, lasting three hours, wearied the honored guest. In paying tribute to Bishop Matulaitis, some of the speakers used allegorical imagery to describe his position and duties as the successor of the Apostles in the hierarchy of the Church. Dr. Rosenbaum, the Jewish member of the Council, spoke in Russian and used the biblical theme of the Tower of Babel to point up the fact that dissensions, fears, and intolerance were caused by a confusion of tongues. It was only the voice, the person, and the prayers of the Bishop as prophet that could restore harmony

where godly events and science had failed. Mr. Stasys Silingas used the imagery of vestal virgins whose duty it was to watch the sacred fire to illustrate the duties of the bishop in preserving the message of Christ's cross. Mr. Michael Birziska stressed the necessity of integrity in basing national culture and progress on inherited distinctiveness rather than on an amalgamation of borrowed characteristics. Father Mironas alluded to the Church as being not just the Bark of Peter, but a whole squadron whose Captain is Christ. Canon Tumas referred to the Bishop as the "Star of Hope" toward whom the multitudes, separated and encapsulated in themselves, could direct their hopes and aspirations and receive in return the light of love and compassion. Mr. Voldemaras likened him to the Gustavus of Adam Mickiewicz's poetry...

Bishop Matulaitis responded to the testimonials in a humble and gracious manner, thereby gaining the trust and respect of all present.

The Prussians, Calvinists, the Polish-speaking Lithuanians, unbelievers, socialists, government officials, the Council, White Russians, all poured out their travails and desires, so that the Shepherd might aid them in their difficulties.

From His Excellency's answers, this is how the Bishop of the Capital of Lithuania was visualized: 'I am a Lithuanian; however, I learned and use the Polish tongue well. I have worked long in Poland proper and was always conscious of Poles only as human beings in need of eternal salvation. I shall regard all peoples in that same light. Differences in language, religious beliefs, geographical borders will not make a difference, for Christ is the only foundation for morality and a strong society. Nor shall the irreligious receive less attention, for faith is a matter of good will and cannot be legislated. I have lived with those who do not share my faith and will continue to live with them in harmony. The differences in political philosophies will not alienate people from me. Nor shall the intolerance which slanders and blackens people to make them monstrous deter me from seeing persons for what they are.

'I am the representative of Him who blessed peace and all people of good will. I shall be of good will. My success in holding to these resolutions will depend, not on myself alone, but upon all of you who show me good will as I stand above all parties, ideologies, or other differences. Let us place the fruits of good will into the common treasury of the nation where the contributions of all in the fields of the arts, education, politics, government, family life, all based on charity, will create a strong, enduring national unity.'

Chapter 9

Bishop of a Beleaguered Diocese

The two great empires of Russia and Germany clashed in armed conflict in 1914. Lithuania was the battle ground. The Germans pushed the Russians out of the country and occupied Vilnius on September 18, 1915. The new occupational regime instituted martial law and land reforms. The German front moved quickly into Russia itself, but the end of warfare was far from being over. To protect the flanks and rear of the army, the Germans and Austro-Hungarians on November 5, 1916, reconstituted Poland from territories previously occupied by the Russians. Soon, in March of 1917, the Russian Czarist regime was overthrown by the Bolsheviks.

The overthrow of the Provisional Government of Alexander Kerensky in October 1917 marked the beginning of Russian Communism. Internecine struggles, bloodshed, and terror gripped the expanse of the Russian empire. Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) seized power and declared a proletarian dictatorship. He decided to seek peace with Germany at any price except for annexation and reparation payments. Negotiations took place in Brest, which was then the site of the German High Command for the Eastern Front. Lenin capitulated to the Germans. This freed their forces for the Western Front.

The safety of Vilnius was considerably compromised by Germany's surrender and the signing of the Armistice with the Western Allies on November 11, 1918. Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany fled to Holland and the might of the

Most Rev. Edward O'Rourke, consecrated Bishop of Riga on December 15, 1918 at Vilnius by Bishop George Matulaitis

German army disintegrated. The occupational German government in Vilnius was taken over by boards of military men while soldiers delayed their retreat to Germany. Lithuanian militiamen tried to keep order in the city while Bolshevik agitators incited the workers. The Poles waited for help from Warsaw. Moscow took advantage of the situation, and on December 12 its army started to invade Lithuania. Red troops took Svencioniai, Utena, Rokiskis, and launched a drive on Vilnius.

It was under these conditions that Bishop Matulaitis

began his tenure as the head of the Vilnius diocese. Each day he had to bear its calamities, which threatened to engulf him. It is fortunate that he found time to record incidents as they happened. These records are a part of the Process of Beatification and are known as the Third Diary (the record of events involving the person). This is the most authentic source for recounting the difficulties he encountered during his episcopacy.

Bishop Matulaitis was a tower of strength in Vilnius, unwaveringly performing his duties as disturbing news of Bolshevik peril increased daily. His journal informs us that his mornings were filled with a constant stream of callers: priests, laity, representatives of religious congregations, and important citizens. In the afternoons he called on various officials to keep abreast of their activities as events transpired.

On December 15, just a week after his ingress, Bishop Matulaitis was ordaining prelate for the newly appointed Bishop of Riga, Edward Alexander O'Rourke (1876-1943). Bishop Karevicius of Kaunas was co-consecrator, but Bishop Lozinski was unable to attend because Minsk had already been occupied by the Bolsheviks. Msgr. Casimir Michalkevicius and other officials attended.

At a luncheon on the next day, Bishop Matulaitis took advantage of their presence to discuss practical questions facing them and their priests as the danger of Bolshevik take-over approached. The conclusion was to avoid politics in their sermons, but to emphasize the teachings of Christ. It was advisable to put financial matters in order in the event of raids and searches. If evidence of property ownership would be demanded, only copies of deeds should be given. It was also suggested that the practice followed by the priests in Russia be adopted in keeping contacts with the Bolsheviks on a personal and private but not official level.

The question of re-possessing church properties seized by the Russians during their long occupation was also considered, and the decision was made that priests lay claim

to and actually take possession of these properties wherever possible. Some routine matters of minor concern were also discussed. It was decided that church records be kept in Latin, and that bishops share with each other their pastoral letters, edicts and publications in order to have uniformity in their common acts. The matters of parish missions, retreats, and the establishment of religious communities also came up.

On the evening of the same day (December 16), the Bishop conferred with the priests of the city on how to prepare themselves and their people for the impending Bolshevik activities. The priests were urged to be more assiduous in preparing sermons, in writing to the press, in taking the census and visiting their parishioners, in promoting devotions and a more frequent use of the Sacraments. They were also advised to provide question boxes for their people to be able to answer their inquiries and settle doubts.

It was also decided to have a series of reparation services in all the urban churches, and it was left up to the dean of the city to arrange the schedule and provide themes for sermons. The Bishop requested that he be informed by letter should some questions or problems arise that could be matter for further clergy conferences.

The city started to seethe with unrest. Various political parties maneuvered for control of the city and the government. There were six contenders: the Lithuanian National Council; the German Military Council; a Polish Committee; a Workers (Bolshevik) Council; another Bolshevik Council in Vileika; and the remnants of the old Russian City Council. An increase in the number of newspapers in various languages was noted in the city.

The Germans played each party against the other by not allowing any of them to become fully entrenched and by forbidding arms to all of them. To the Lithuanian Council they turned over the official government buildings which they could neither maintain nor protect, and handed over the control of the city to the old city council. The

Bolsheviks were given some concessions, but as later events demonstrated, the Germans really gave the city over to the Polish Legionaries. In the Bishop's journal we find:

> My position was extremely difficult. What pleased some was displeasing to others. Everything was boiling over. There was no answer to what could be done. I held fast to Christ and the Church. I saw that Lithuanians and Poles were straining for their own aims with little regard for the welfare of the Church. On Christmas eve I visited various Lithuanian and Polish institutions for the traditional sharing of Christmas wafers, and then officiated at the Midnight Mass in the Cathedral.

He writes on December 27:

> Stephen Mickiewicz, commissar of the government in Warsaw called on me to inform me that the Polish government intended to occupy Lithuania; that this would not mean annexation; that the right of self-determination would be granted. He also told me that the Legionaries and the Polish government would guarantee the freedom of the Church and protect the freedom of all nations. The Bishop considered this as flimsy bait on which to catch him. Without going into details, he responded at once: "I do not involve myself in politics, but if the Legionaries come, my priests and I will be as equally concerned about their salvation as of other people. I preach to all without exception the need of unity, love and brotherhood. This is my duty as shepherd."

The Bishop was very happy when Father Joseph Vaitkevicius, professor at Wloclawek seminary, arrived on December 29.

* * *

As the Bishop was considering what stance he should take in case of a Bolshevik occupation, he learned on December 30 that the Germans were to move out on January 2, the day of the last passenger train, and that the Lithuanian Council and government officials also would leave the city.

On New Year's Day about 5:00 p.m., the Polish Legionaries took control of the city. After an exchange of gunfire, the Bolshevik Workers Council surrendered to the

Legionaries who had surrounded their headquarters. Some Lithuanians and many Jewish bolsheviks were taken prisoners. The Legion commandant Stephen Mokrzecki, proclaimed martial law in the city.

Many priests fled to Vilnius from localities already over-run by the Bolsheviks and reported that they were steadily advancing toward Vilnius. Analyzing their reports the Bishop wrote:

> In my opinion the Legionaries will not be able to hold Vilnius. Their shooting, arrests, and display of power did nothing more than irritate the members of opposing political parties. Without a doubt the Bolsheviks will wreak vengeance on the priests and then on the Poles. There were no Lithuanians or Jews among the Legionaries. This ill-conceived operation to advance their national cause presumed on the cooperation of the villagers in outlying areas. From the refugee priests I learned that the villagers were not eager to engage in fighting. They see the Bolshevik advance as an attack not on them but on land-owners and priests. The Poles still expect some help from Warsaw, but it seems their hopes are groundless for even there they lack arms and ammunition.

The Dolorist Brothers on January 3 sent one of their religious to ask the Bishop if it would be proper to join the Legionaries in order to avoid the sneering taunts of being unpatriotic laggards. The Bishop replied that it was forbidden by Canon Law for religious to bear arms in view of their vocation, but if they so chose they could care for the sick and wounded in hospitals.

One of the more impetuous Polish pastors asked whether he could allow a machine-gun to be set up in his church's steeple. The Bishop strictly forbade this for houses of God are not to serve the purposes of war. On the very next day this same priest came as an emissary of General Wejtko to discuss forming a Chaplain Corps for the Polish Legionaries. He offered to act as dean and assign chaplains only with the permission of the Bishop. The Bishop agreed that it was necessary to provide everyone with the means of salvation, especially in the danger of death, but that he himself would appoint chaplains as they volunteered.

Sporadic gun-fire erupted here and there in the city and the Bishop's secretary reported that the people were expressing disappointment that the priests were not more visible in this hour of need. The Bishop replied that the events had to be viewed more soberly and that it was not seemly for priests to get involved in disputes and warfare at the expense of their ministry for the Church and the salvation of souls.

The show of force by the Legionaries in Vilnius was brief and ineffectual. They planned a hurried retreat to Grodno for re-grouping and reinforcements and then in about two weeks to re-capture Vilnius. Meanwhile they had no choice, they claimed, but to leave the city to the Bolsheviks. A part of the Legion had already retreated from Vilnius and the rest found it hard to leave because the Germans had taken all the locomotives and railroad cars with them.

The entry in the Bishop's journal for January 5 was a musing reflection on the troubled mentality of the people:

> Life in Vilnius is very difficult. The path is very thorny. The Polish populace fears me and looks distrustfully at what I might do. Even during the welcoming speeches at my inaugural one lady expressed the wish that I be not a stepfather but a real father to the Polish people. The Lithuanians were also fearful that I might be partial to the Poles. I found it hard to gain the confidence of both.
>
> National antagonisms are most intense. The Poles do not recognize the Lithuanians and White Russians. By intent and in fact they are taking control of the government. On the other hand, the Lithuanians contend that the populace is not really Polish but White Russian, and for that reason there is no point in giving consideration to the Polish land-owners and chauvinists. The leaders of the White Russians want what they consider to be rightfully theirs, but their people are uneducated, neglected, and not conscious of their identity. Attempts to speak or preach to them in their language are met by hatred and resistance. The Jews are more inclined to side with the Russians. And there are all those intransigent political parties! The city is boiling over with hatred and intolerance.

The material needs of the Bishop were supplied mainly

by Canon Kukta and the Marians at Mariampole. They helped provide the necessary furnishings and food. The local Poles seemed unwilling to help in any of this. The Bishop writes:

> There is so much work and so many problems. There is need for so many personal appearances and speeches. My physical resources are spent. I suffer from insomnia, but this gives me opportunity for more prayers. I never lacked for God's abundant graces which comforted and sustained me. How good the Lord is! Even though the crosses are many, He makes them bearable and sweet. Lord, how much I love you! Punish and chastise me for my faults, but give me the grace of loving you ever more. I promise to serve everyone equally in your Name, no matter what difficulties I encounter. Please, God, give me the grace of perseverance.
>
> On the evening of January 5, groups of Legionaries still marched the streets of the city singing Polish songs. Shortly before 8 o'clock an exchange of shots was heard near my residence, and at 8 o'clock the communists took over the city. The Legion forces hurriedly left for Grodno. Doubtless, their leaders, provocateurs, and supporters left with them. During the brief time of their posturing they did nothing more than arouse the populace by arrests, attacks, raids, and gunfire. They angered the Jews, Lithuanians, White Russians, and especially the communists. This can only bring vengeance by the bolsheviks on innocent people.
>
> It is sad that old people bolstered the goals of the Legionaries by trusting them, supporting them, and urging young men to join them. It is much more regrettable that many Polish priests mixed in with them. It can be said that the formation of the Legion was in great part their idea. Here, in Vilnius, they are deeply involved in politics. If it were not for the priests, the land-owners could accomplish nothing. Many of these priests will have to flee, and thus even bring misfortune on the Church and the remaining priests... A priest must be equally the father and shepherd of all. He cannot be a party member and, even more so, he cannot take part in any conspiracies. I pray that this breed of priest-politician disappear from our beloved Church. Whenever I reflect on the discord surrounding us, the thought comes that God will be very severe in punishing priests for their involvement.

He further describes the scene as the Bolsheviks took over:

> When I arose on the morning of January 6, 1919 I could see companies of the Red Army patroling otherwise empty streets.

Here and there devout women were on their way to or from church. Some men and women emerged timidly from their homes and stared at the change that had taken place. Later, more and more people appeared on the streets, but both they and the streets were not those of yesterday.

Yesterday the streets were filled with roving Legionaries and many young people, especially girls. Well-to-do citizens went about their business. An occasional Jew left his hiding-place and furtively hurried along. The Poles, bedecked with White Eagles, strutted about and felt they were in command. Occasionally, sleighs filled with Legionaries swept by. Today the scene is entirely different. The streets are filled only with the poor and working people. The Jews are out in the open. Here and there young men and women greet the soldiers and chat with them. It would seem that some are acquaintances. A goodly number of the soldiers are Jews. The bourgeoisie has disappeared. The Red Army and proletarians fill the sleighs... An entirely different city!

It was peaceful, although there were reports that some Legionaries in hiding had been arrested. People advised me to leave the city or move to another house. I decided against it. Whatever happens will be as God disposes. If it is His will, they may arrest or even kill me. It makes no difference. I am at peace because I feel that I have harmed no one. I offered the main high Mass in a crowded Cathedral.

The short-lived campaign by the Legionaries ended catastrophically. Bishop Matulaitis included in his journal some of the popular speculations as to its cause. Some said that the Poles, more precisely Warsaw, wanted to show the world that Vilnius was a Polish city, and even announced that the Lithuanian Council was in agreement with the Poles to let the Legionaries operate in Lithuania. By this it was implied that Lithuania was in accord with Poland.

Others thought that the Germans allowed the Legion to mobilize and take over Vilnius so that disruptive elements, which were a constant source of irritation to them, would surface and be more easily eliminated. Or perhaps the Germans, in not taking sides with the bolsheviks, wanted to justify themselves to the Allies. The latter conclusion was drawn from a report that the Legionaries had drawn back only as far as Lentvaris, that

some were disarmed by Germans, that by a subsequent agreement they were given back their arms, taken by train to Bialystok, and allowed to return to Poland.

On January 8, 1919, the Bolsheviks paraded through the city in a solemn funeral procession and buried their slain comrades near the Cathedral on the former site of a monument to Catherine II. Many people, mostly Jews, attended. The eulogies were given in Lithuanian, Polish, and Russian. The Polish speaker made a special point of attacking the clergy as having been responsible for the action of the Legionaries. The day was declared a workers' holiday, all work was suspended, the stores were closed. It was ordered that homes and buildings display red banners. Bolshevik newspaper reports of the event were rather low-keyed to convey the impression that, although there was reason for it, the Red Army for lack of time would not take revenge but push forward to liberate the working classes.

But this was merely a fleeting reassurance. Soon there was a shortage of food in the city and prices soared: a pound of bread rose from 60 kopecks to 5 rubles; butter from seven or eight rubles to thirty rubles, etc. A shortage of other products developed. Farmers ceased delivering their produce to the city for fear of being robbed and, even worse, of being forced to act as chauffeurs for the bolshevik soldiers. The city was inundated with all kinds of rumors; many people were arrested; apartments and homes were confiscated. In their fright and confusion, the people sought hiding-places.

By arrangement of the communist party leaders, the City Council underwent a change. The elections were so rigged that only communist party members and their sympathizers took office. The better and more sumptuous homes of the city were requisitioned to house party members and the military.

The Bishop's residence was not spared. Some young men wanted to live there. In a lengthy conversation Bishop Matulaitis explained that there was not sufficient room for them and that he himself was a communist.

> I am a religious with the vow of poverty, and I came here with only some hand luggage. The Church and its lands are a commune. When I leave, someone else takes my position and house and makes use of it.

The communists, however, insisted that the building was large enough and well furnished. They would bring their "wives." "Well enough, let them live here," the Bishop replied calmly. The men left their Jewish "wives" in the parlor and departed. News of this rapidly spread throughout the city. People came and evicted the women. This made the Catholics more alert. Whenever any threat was made on the Bishop, crowds gathered instantly.

In an effort to forestall land seizure by the bolsheviks, the leaders of the Christian Democrats in Vilnius announced that government lands and the big estates should be parcelled out to farm laborers, the landless, and small farmers. The amount of compensation was to be left to the Constitutional Convention. However, the bolsheviks had their own decree on land reform. They declared all the land and wealth of the large estates and the Church to be community property. Bishop Matulaitis writes:

> This decree was of great concern to myself, my Chapter, and to all priests. I studied the Church's legislation on Church possessions and property so that I would not err in stating the Church's position and interests. I consulted with the Chapter and those who had experienced the revolution in Russia. On Monsignor Michalkevicius' advice, I summoned a well-known lawyer, Thaddeus Wroblewski (1858-1925), to discuss these matters. He agreed to draw up the articles for an association of parishioners whereby Church property could be defended.
>
> When the articles were prepared, they showed that the parish councils would be the sole guardians, care-takers, and governors of church property. Priests were not even mentioned because otherwise the legal instrument would not be acceptable to the bolsheviks. When I heard this, I stated that this was entirely contrary to Canon Law and that I could not on my own authority affirm these articles or recommend them to the priests. My decision was to let the matter rest for now and see what will eventually evolve.
>
> I advised the priests that if the bolsheviks attempted to seize

church property they were to establish committees to protect it, but in no way to accept personal responsibility. I asked them to explain this matter to their people and to emphasize that the property belongs to the Church and not to individual priests. If the property was seized nonetheless, the parishioners would be obliged to find other means of supporting the Church and its priests. The bolsheviks had already established councils of farmhands and laborers on many of the estates. As yet, there were no seizures of Church lands.

I am worried even more about religious education in our schools. From the beginning the bolsheviks threatened to issue a decree whereby priests, religious instructions, and all religious symbols were to be removed from the schools as had already been done in some places. This created a furor among the people who demanded vehemently that the teaching of religion be retained. They threatened that, if priests and religious training were taken out, they would refuse to send their children to such schools.

News reached the Bishop that in one place a bolshevik commissar had removed the principal from a Catholic high school and appointed one of his own, who proceeded to follow the bolshevik line. The upper classmen refused to attend school and the younger ones cried when forced to attend classes. When he saw that the school was disintegrating, the commissar restored the principal and the former program. The Bishop instructed the priests to organize parent committees for the schools to defend their rights and to demand that religious instructions be given their children.

The Catholic population of Vilnius was roused by the school question. Priests and laymen approached the Bishop for advice. The Polish teachers were divided among themselves. The practising Catholics among them were determined that religious instructions remain in the schools, but others were inclined to go along with the bolsheviks. The Polish delegates asked the Bishop to arbitrate and set guide-lines in order to save the schools.

The attorney, Mr. Wroblewski, came to determine the Bishop's intentions on the secularization of schools. He explained the desperate situation facing the Poles. In the

event that the schools give in to the demands of the bolsheviks, the priests would rebel and the parents would boycott with the result that the schools would be deprived of the financial support provided by the government and even lose the buildings. As an alternative, he proposed that they comply with the edict in order to keep the high schools and their own teachers, but give religious instructions in separate buildings outside the school program. The Bishop replied that he could not accept this compromise and repeated that it was the duty of the parents to protest. The teachers should make it clear that this kind of dichotomy was undesirable because the students would get the impression that religion is just an incidental factor in their lives, subject to convenience and accommodation.

The lawyer then asked if Lithuanian parents also are prepared to protest, and the Bishop replied that they were as far as he knew. The incident is reported in the journal:

> From my conversations with Mr. Wroblewski and Polish delegates, it became evident that if we Catholics and priests boycotted the secularized schools, then the Poles could claim that we brought harm on the Polish community and disrupted their educational system. The Polish socialists of every hue could use this in their battle with the Church.

Mr. Koscialkowski called on the Bishop and introduced himself as a good Catholic and the principal of a Polish boys high school whose faculty was a mixture of Catholic and non-Catholic teachers. They were in conflict over the same issue. He advanced the same arguments and suggested the same compromise as did Mr. Wroblewski. The Bishop replied that his instructions cannot differ from those of the Church. In proof, he read the section in Canon Law where it was clearly stated that Catholic parents had the right and the duty to demand Catholic training for their children. He also warned the principal not to be fatuous in thinking that the bolsheviks would honor this right once they gave government subsidies to the schools.

Somewhat later another "tempter," Henry Lukaszewski, appeared and told the Bishop that he was the

director of the high school in Vitebsk where the teachers agreed to remove religious instructions from the classroom. A priest teaches religion in a separate facility. The students, he claimed, accepted this arrangement readily and were even more faithful in their religious practices. He said that the bolsheviks gave money to their school. He was surprised that the bolshevik demands created such an uproar in Vilnius. As though in friendly warning, he added that, if the people continued to object, the Bishop would be arrested as was the Orthodox exarch in Vitebsk. Understanding at whose behest this worthy was speaking, the Bishop calmly replied: "Then I will go to jail."

The Bishop writes in his journal:

> Thank God, the edict has not yet been made. I prayed all this time that we would be spared. Our Church has suffered so much under the czars, and now this new cross for the sake of freedom of conscience. Lord, how unpredictable is this world! These same people who so recently denounced capital punishment are now shooting and killing their captured enemies. The same people who recentrly fought for freedom of the press and against censorship are now trying to silence newspapers expressing a differing viewpoint. Those who demanded equal rights for all are now recognizing these rights only for themselves and the small group of their partisans. How dreadful is this business of politicking when principles are invoked which could be expected of uncivilized savages, viz., if you take what is mine, that is a crime; but if I take what is yours, that is my right..

Many pressing matters had to be dealt with, so the Bishop after January 10 did not make an entry in his journal for a month. After the February 10 entry, which was a summary of the school crisis, there was no other entry for a week. The February 16 entry states:

> During the past week Father Muckermann's trial absorbed all my time and gave me much work, trouble, and grief.

* * *

Father Frederick Muckermann (1883-1946) was a German Jesuit, writer, sociologist, and preacher. During

World Ward I he lived in Vilnius and conducted services for the German soldiers in St. Casimir's church which had been used as a Russian Orthodox church since 1840. Originally the church and adjoining buildings were the Lithuanian Jesuit Center built in 1609. Besides services for the German soldiers, Father Muckermann learned enough Polish to be able to preach to the other people who attended. Toward the end of the war, the Russian clergy tried to repossess the church, but met with opposition from the people.

When Bishop Matulaitis became Ordinary of Vilnius, the Orthodox archpriest, through one of his priests and later personally, began to request the return of the church. The Bishop replied that the church had been built by the Catholics and they would not give it up. The same appeal was made to the Germans, but was denied. Even the bolsheviks told the Orthodox authorities that they had enough churches of their own and that this church had been expropriated from the Catholics.

The Bishop was worried that, when the Germans left Vilnius, St. Casimir's church might be lost to the Catholics. He asked Father Muckermann to remain in Vilnius and not return with the soldiers to Germany. If the Catholics retained the church, then the Jesuits could re-establish their monastery there. Father Muckermann remained and was appointed rector of St. Casimir's.

When the bolsheviks came, the subsidiary activities of religious life were interrupted. The leader of the Polish Catholic Workers movement, Father Olszanski, had to go into hiding for a time. Hence Father Muckermann asked the Bishop if he could initiate activities among the workers. This was a welcome suggestion because both were interested in preserving the church itself and in putting the other facilities to good use. The Bishop advised the rector to clear his activities with the bolsheviks and to avoid involvement with politics or nationalities. The rector agreed to limit his work strictly to religious instructions and the Church's cultural and social principles.

On a Sunday afternoon Father Muckermann called a meeting of workers and many attended. The meeting was held in one of the unoccupied buildings next to the church, and the Society of Christian Workers was organized. The movement caught on with the laboring class of all nationalities so that in a short time there were more than nine thousand members, men and women. The Bishop appointed as helper a White Russian priest, Father Michael Petrovski, who was a good speaker and was well versed in the principles of Catholic Social Action.

The work of religious instruction and Catholic relief services blossomed through this organization. A community kitchen was established. A cooperative, warehouses, and community theaters were among the other projects which succeeded in filling the immediate needs of the people. It was even decided to publish a newspaper, but this displeased the bolsheviks no end. The first issue was printed and was immediately confiscated. On the night of February 9 two militiamen called on Father Muckermann and ordered him to leave Vilnius within 24 hours.

This news reached Bishop Matulaitis early the next morning when Father Muckermann, Canon Julius Ellert, pastor of St. John's parish which included St. Casimir's church, and Duchess Gruzinskas came to consult. Father Muckermann decided to go into hiding in Vilnius until the situation cleared up. The Bishop's journal reports:

> When news of Father Muckermann's threatened expulsion became widespread, people crowded into St. Casimir church. Father Muckermann went to the church to bid farewell and preached a sermon. When he tried to leave, he was restrained by the people who vowed that they would not permit him to be banished. This was also the intent of the crowd milling about in the street.
>
> In their attempt to quell the disturbance, some Jewish militiamen fired several shots into the air. One of the bullets shattered a church window. The angry crowd fell upon, disarmed, and turned the militiamen over to the Red Army. The people considered this incident a provocation on the part of the Jews because Jewish girls had been noticed distributing and even pasting

leaflets on the church doors and walls on Saturday and Sunday. The leaflets were a protest against Father Muckermann.

When the Bolsheviks felt that the incident could turn into a pogrom, they removed the Jewish militia from the streets around the church and replaced them with regulars of the Red Army. It was also announced to the people that the individuals responsible for the shooting would be punished...

No attempts were made to detain the people who left the church, but the authorities kept others from entering. The people made many repeated appeals to the bolshevik government in behalf of Father Muckermann. The railroad and electrical workers even threatened a strike. Individuals and delegations approached me in the Muckermann affair, and all the Catholics in the city became involved. I did what I could to help him...

I sent Father Tumas to Kapsukas, the communist leader, with a written deposition explaining that Father Muckermann had remained in the city at my request and that he intended no subversive activities. The workers' society he formed was done at their own request and it had no political axes to grind; that I was aware of and approved the priest's work. I asked Father Tumas to explain how deeply the Catholics were aroused by the threatened expulsion and at the Jews. Kapsukas replied that Father Muckermann could not remain, and that the church would be kept under siege until the priest and the people surrender; that the people and the priest would not be punished, etc.

Some women broke through the army lines and brought food to the besieged occupants of the church. Power lines had been cut to keep the church in darkness. The people remaining with Father Muckermann kept watch and prayed all day and night. On Wednesday February 12 about 4:30 in the morning, Polish officers of the Red Army forced their way into the church, fired shots into the ceiling, scattered the people and took Father Muckermann by force. The people, especially the women, tried to protect him, but the soldiers brutally tussled with him and cruelly manhandled his defenders. Father Muckermann was taken away. Many people were arrested and held in buildings formerly occupied by the Council. Some of these were released, but the more educated among them were jailed. The church and the meeting hall were locked and placed under guard of the soldiers.

The Bishop again sent Father Tumas to Kapsukas with a written request that the church keys be returned and that services in the church be allowed to resume. He asked Father Tumas to find out where Father Muckermann was

being held and to request that all the incarcerated be released. Kapsukas promised to return the keys and release the people, with the exception of Father Muckermann, after a full investigation. Kapsukas sent a note informing the Bishop that Father Muckermann was jailed in Minsk until his trial. A few words, written by Father Muckermann and attached to the note, stated that he was being treated well by the soldiers and asked the Bishop to use his influence to quiet the people. Clearly, this assurance was added to allay the rumors that he had already been murdered by the bolsheviks.

These events created so much panic among the people that many of them asked the Bishop's advice about remaining in Vilnius or fleeing. He told them to remain, but advised a few of them not to sleep at home. Out of concern for these harried people, he decided to write a pastoral letter. His journal continues:

> After a hectic day, I sat down to compose a letter to the Catholics of Vilnius. I wanted it read on Sunday in all the churches. Its composition was difficult. On the one hand, I wanted to stress that Catholic workers were well within their rights in their demands; but, on the other hand, I had to be careful that the bolshevik government would not find anything they might consider as opposition to the Revolution. It was necessary to pacify the people in order to prevent bloody riots and then to be reassuring enough to prevent them from sinking into despair and have them feel that I am recommending a stoic compliance with all that would burden them unlawfully.

On the following day the Bishop shared the letter with Fathers Lubianiec, Maciejewicz, Kretowicz, and Steckiewicz and asked for their opinion. They suggested a few elisions. The matter of printing it came up. The stocks of paper and the printing presses had already been requisitioned by the bolsheviks. Finally a printer was found. The Lithuanian translation of the Polish text was ready on Friday evening. On Saturday, February 15, the Bishop was beset by various advisers. The Poles suggested that a procession or demonstration take place at St. Casimir church, that the

pastoral letter not be read in the churches, and that he refrain from speaking to the workers. One Lithuanian priest warned him that the bolsheviks might arrest him, that the Polish nationalists wanted him to compromise himself and be jailed. The Bishop replied:

> I did not take the advice of either faction because I saw that politics was their only concern. In my opinion a bishop does not evade danger, but faces it, for a good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. What a hardship it is for a bishop where every imaginable faction hangs onto his coat-tails and tugs at him to embrace its cause. Looking to his personage, and hiding behind seemingly lofty ideals, they still seek only their own aims. But God and my Guardian Angel are watching to protect and help.

These events were the beginning of the bolshevik attack in the press on the Church, religion, and Christian morality. It was the preliminary step in an attempt to separate the people from their Church. For instance, the newspapers advertised a Saturday meeting of Polish workers on the theme: "The Working Class and the Catholic Church." The Bishop asked Father Tumas and his own house-man Andrew Meciunas to attend and observe.

The meeting was far from being a success for the bolsheviks, because the people interrupted the speakers and caused disturbances whenever attacks were made on the Church and religion. Only about 10% of the assembly were bolsheviks. The meeting was repeated on Sunday evening for the people of the neighboring towns and villages. Nothing of these meetings was reported in the press. It would seem that even the bolsheviks admitted their failure.

Father Tumas summarized the nature of the aspersions made against religion and the Church at the Saturday meeting. The Bishop decided to answer them personally at a 4:00 p.m. Sunday service at St. Casimir's church if this were allowed, otherwise at the Cathedral. This announcement was made to the people, and it was estimated that several thousand filled the cathedral and overflowed into adjacent areas.

After Vespers, the Bishop ascended the pulpit and

preached for an hour on the bonds between the Church and people, and mankind's relationship with God. He urged his audience to live in peace and harmony with all citizens, and not to create or take part in any political uprisings. After the sermon the congregation sang "Holy God" and "God, Our Refuge." The services were concluded with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. A further entry in the journal reads:

> The bolsheviks could not have been pleased with my pastoral letter or my sermon. They could have caused my arrest if they so desired. On my return from the Cathedral, I took care of the most important matters, wrote the appointments of my designees to rule the diocese and to head the Marian Fathers Congregation in the event that I were jailed. I gave these documents for safekeeping to Father Joseph Vaitkevicius and resigned myself to God's Providence. The disorder caused by the bolsheviks effectively halted carrying out the routine work of the diocese. I had begun to feel a sort of apathy and malaise.
>
> But now that the battle had begun, I felt a surge of new and vital strength permeating me. I felt an ineffable and unquenchable desire to defend our precious Church, to suffer for her and to sacrifice my all for her. Although I did not make direct reference to the bolsheviks, I spoke against the immorality and the deceit of their tenets. It was evident that the people understood well what I wanted to say. They listened attentively and, it seems, pondered it in their hearts. May God be praised and His Holy and our loving Mother Church be exalted!

* * *

At the meeting of the Christian Workers Association immediately after the impressive sermon at the Cathedral, several members were chosen as delegates to appeal to the bolshevik authorities to release the imprisoned and to allow the use of St. Casimir's church. On the next day February 17 at 10 a.m., the delegates consulted with the Bishop and, in some fear, asked whether they could be arrested if they approached the authorities. The Bishop told them that even he could be arrested, but that it was necessary to do what was right. Somewhat reassured, they made the rounds of the various government offices until they were

able to meet with City Council head, Comrade Eidukevicius. He promised to return the church, remove the guards, and to release the prisoners after a full investigation. He told them also that the Bishop could appoint a rector and send properly authorized personnel to reclaim the church.

Of course, this concession was made not because of the delegates, but because of the great crowds at the Sunday services. Whether they liked it or not, the bolsheviks still had to reckon with the working classes. The Bishop immediately appointed Canon Ellert as rector and designated four of the Workers as custodians of the church. He also designated Fathers Petrovski and Charucki to celebrate Mass and conduct other services there.

Father Muckermann's fate was not clear as yet. There were still rumors that his life was in danger. It was known only that he was still imprisoned in Minsk and that the local bishop and his people provided him with food. When the bolsheviks were expelled from Vilnius and Lithuania just before Easter on April 19-20, 1919, all news of him ceased. Only much later it was learned that after nine months of imprisonment in Smolensk, he was released in a prisoner exchange through the efforts of Dr. Feriere, president of the International Red Cross.

On his return to Germany, Father Muckermann continued his religious and social activities and wrote books and articles in defense of workers' rights. He warned his countrymen about the dangers of bolshevism in his book, Der Bolschevismus Droht (1931), and edited and published a magazine Der Gral. Because of his activities in opposing Hitler's Nazism, he fled to Holland, later to Paris and finally to Montreux in Switzerland where he died in 1946.

* * *

Although initially the bolsheviks in Vilnius did not take any drastic measures, they persisted in terrorizing individuals and institutions. Bishop Matulaitis wrote a letter

on February 18 to the bishop of Minsk asking him to make use of the priests from Vilnius by assigning them to abandoned parishes.

A nun of the Holy Angels Congregation, Sister Radzevicius, came to the Bishop for advice in a situation existing in the two institutions they staffed for infants and children. In one of them there was a chapel but no resident chaplain and Mass was celebrated there only occasionally by visiting priests. In the other there was a chapel and an eighty-year old resident priest Father Obolevicius. The bolsheviks had demanded that they eliminate the chapels and get rid of the priest because more space was needed for the children. The Bishop told the nuns not to evict the priest. If the bolsheviks should do so, a place would be found for him. The priest remained.

There were many other callers. On the same evening, a rather nondescript individual, whose identity was hard to determine, was one of them. Of him the Bishop writes in his journal:

> In the evening I had an odd visitor. He introduced himself as Mr. Kairys and claimed to be a relative or a good friend of Bishop Ropp. He said that as a good Catholic he could not bear to stand by as the bolsheviks attacked the faith and the Church. He offered the suggestion that I send priests in civilian clothes to attend all bolshevik meetings.
>
> I had my suspicions about him because of the way he greeted me. His was not the customary address which knowledgeable Catholics used in speaking to their bishop. He spoke very poor Polish and his general demeanor was such that it was evident that he had no close ties with priests or bishops. It became apparent that he was unduly interested to find out what I thought of the bolsheviks. After I asked him, he admitted that he was employed by the bolsheviks as an instructor of agricultural economy.
>
> When I understood with whom I was dealing, I began a discursive enumeration of bolshevik injustices and cruelties. I told him that we priests were not involved in politics, but that we would defend with all our might the Church, religion and the freedom of conscience. I gave him proofs that by their destructive behavior the bolsheviks had gained only the animosity of the

people, and that, if they tried to secularize the schools, they would only alienate them so much more.

There was much more I told this gentleman and I warned him specifically that the bolsheviks should not secularize the schools. I asked him to report all our discussions to the bolsheviks who had sent him. Mr. Kairys slipped out the door and left without gaining much. It seems that I will have to preach to people of his ilk about death and judgment after the manner of St. Ignatius.

It was the Bishop's custom to receive all callers without exception. He was patient in hearing all of them and in these troubled times tried to the best of his ability to help each one. He was well-informed in many matters and conducted himself with assurance whatever the situation. He was quick to appreciate his callers' needs and treated each one charitably.

* * *

In an interview with Father Stanislaus Milkowski, the Bishop asked him to assist Father Petrovski in his work as a youth leader. As the Bishop described Father Muckermann's apostolate among the workers and youth, he once more emphasized the principles on which this work should be based: universality and solid adherence to Christian sociology. Because Father Milkowski was a seminary professor and a devout priest of a practical turn of mind, the Bishop was interested in getting his opinion on the effects of the diversity of languages used in the diocese.

The Bishop complained that there were many nationalist priests, Polish and Lithuanian, and too few Catholic priests; that some even thought the vehicle of nationality was the way to bring people to God and his Church, not realizing that the vehicle itself breaks down. To illustrate his point, he referred to the scope of Father Muckermann's work which was the point of attraction for so many people. In this context he contrasted the chauvinism of lay people who used religion, the priestly state, and the Church to further their political goals. When

the Church and Catholicism needed defense, they knew how to sidestep this responsibility.

This was proved by the problem of the Polish schools. Earlier when there was need to preserve the ethnic character of the schools from German infection, the Polish priests and lay people voted that it would be better to liquidate the schools than to have the children Germanized. Now that there was reason to defend these schools from becoming secularized, these same people were divided and some opted to give in to bolshevism saying that opposition would deprive them of their Polish schools and prejudice their nationality.

Father Milkowski openly stated that the seminary was responsible for this sick nationalism among the priests. In his opinion the remedy was a sweeping change in this institution. The seminary authorities, especially Canon Lubianiec, were narrow-minded not so much from ill-will as from blissful unawareness. It was long thought in the seminary that Lithuanian heritage was a danger to Catholicism. Now the White Russians suffer from the same prejudice. The seminarians feel this and try to hide their nationality by effacing themselves and becoming ardent Polish nationalists. He supported the Bishop's view that it was necessary to respect and foster the individual nationalities and bring them into an equal communality which is the only way to serve the Church. But he added sadly from his experience that if the seminary should free itself from this Polish ethos, it would soon lose popular support.

The Bishop replied to all of this, that in his opinion, every student in the seminary should learn Polish because it is necessary for all the priests of the diocese. But beyond this each Lithuanian and White Russian priest is to perfect the knowledge of his own tongue. To this Father Milkowski added that it would be useful if all seminarians learned Lithuanian before ordination because this would make the appointment and transfer of priests easier

Very Rev. Andrew Cikoto, Superior General 1933-1939 and Eastern Rite Apostolic Administrator in Manchuria 1939-1948. Exiled to Siberia he died a martyr's death in 1952.

inasmuch as they could serve adequately in parishes of mixed nationalities. The Bishop said:

> I would not make this a requirement. It is much more important that a seminarian leaving the seminary have the heart of a true apostle and voluntarily acquire whatever skills are necessary to serve all the faithful equally. What good is it if a polyglot priest uses different languages only for his political ambitions, for the party, and not for humanity. The necessity of undiscriminating priestly zeal is exemplified by Father Muckermann. He was a German who became proficient in Polish and, despite the fact that there was the worst kind of nationalistic antagonism between the Germans and the Poles, he was able to attract so many people. It was Divine Providence that sent him to me to help in my battle with these pernicious nationalisms.

Father Andrew Cikoto (1891-1952), Superior General of the Order from 1933-1939, was an enlightened White Russian priest who suffered much because of nationalistic antipathies. He came to the Bishop from Molodechno and asked to be transferred to Minsk, the center of White Russian Catholics. He wanted to work among his own and be near the seminary where he could develop his interior

life. The Bishop was reluctant to lose this good priest and asked, "Why can't you do this in Vilnius?"

Father Cikoto heaved a deep sigh and explained how hard it was for a White Russian to hold out here: fellow priests looked at him askance, pointed fingers of suspicion and persecuted him. In a word, to be a White Russian was a grave offense. It would be much easier in Minsk where Bishop Lozinski himself preached in White Russian in the Cathedral after allaying the displeasure of the Poles with a forceful sermon on universal charity.

The Bishop admitted that the White Russians were insufficiently catechized in their own language and that their religious practices suffered thereby. But now that the White Russian national revival was awakening, priests should use all possible means to support it and make sure that no accusations be made against the Church in this matter. The mission of the Church is not to teach languages but to catechize in the language best known to the people. He allowed Father Cikoto to transfer to Minsk.

The March 13 entry in the journal reads:

> A delegation of three White Russians from the village of Idolta came to see me and asked permission to establish a parish. The spokesman used Polish, but as poorly as I speak White Russian. The other two remained silent. Realizing their discomfiture, I asked them to speak in White Russian. Immediately their demeanor changed and they became talkative, happy and confident.
>
> After inquiring about their problems, it appeared that Father Bolic of the Druja parish gave religious instructions in White Russian and preached both in Polish and White Russian. I asked them which language they preferred and understood better. In chorus they replied, 'White Russian, of course.' I encouraged them not to be ashamed of their language because it was God-given even as Russian, Polish, or Lithuanian.
>
> I gave them my blessing, asked that they extend my greetings to their priest and parishioners, and wished them success in establishing their own parish. They left in a very happy mood. One's native tongue is always closer to the heart, and here my Polonizing priests were trying to convince me that the White Russians understood Polish perfectly and did not want to be

addressed in White Russian. I see that I shall have to learn White Russian very soon.

I was warned beforehand that as soon as I start being a truly Catholic bishop, irrespective of nationalities (especially Polish nationalists), I shall meet opposition and even revolt from the priests. This seems to be true. Whom can I trust? On whom can I rely? Where can I find truly Catholic priests? You, O Lord, deign to reform and heal these priests who are infected by the poisonous spirit of nationalities and politics!

* * *

Vilnius was still in a state of upheaval. Plans for its governing were being made not only by the bolsheviks but also by the principal rivals, the Poles and the Lithuanians. The bolshevik offensive was on in Lithuania and encroaching on Poland. Hopes were high that the bolshevik rule in Vilnius would be of short duration.

Canon Lubianiec, the Vice-Rector of the seminary, on March 12 called on the Bishop and told him that Mr. Dybowski, a noted mathematician and engineer, would visit him the next day with some important plans the Poles were projecting.

When Mr. Dybowski arrived, he told the Bishop that the Polish Government in Warsaw had appointed him commandant of Vilnius. The rest of the story was that the Poles in Vilnius had a secret corps of army officers whose purpose was to protect the city from pillage and destruction. After the bolsheviks leave, they plan to take over the government of the city and suburbs, but it was not their intention to be involved in the politics of determining to whom Vilnius would belong. The Bishop listened for a while and quietly asked if the Lithuanians had been consulted. Dybowski replied that contact had been made, but there had been no agreement.

The reason they could not come to terms, the Bishop learned later, was that the Lithuanians inquired whether the Poles would recognize Lithuanian independence and accept Vilnius as its Capital. The answer was negative, so the Lithuanians refused to take part in the plans.

The gentleman added that he considered it his duty to be open and aboveboard in this matter so that the Bishop would not be taken by surprise. He also added that the bolsheviks were indeed planning to arrest the Bishop, but that the Polish officers would protect him. They even had a special refuge prepared for him if that became necessary. It was their understanding that the bolsheviks were to leave on March 23. Dybowski advised the Bishop to go into hiding for two or three days. The Bishop thanked him for expressing their good intentions and concern, and turned the subject of conversation to the amity among different nationalities as it existed in Switzerland. His final words to Mr. Dybowski were:

> Thus far I have avoided all politicking and do not intend to start now. The bishop is ordained for undivided service to all. My position here is very awkward because my flock does not live in harmony and its many factions are contending for Vilnius with the intention of making it their exclusive domain. In my opinion there was no need to be unduly concerned about who would temporarily govern Vilnius. Its final disposition will be made by the Peace Conference in Paris. As for myself, I do not intend to flee or go into hiding... God's will be done... There are so many suffering in prison now and I will suffer with them if I am apprehended.

On March 14 the Bishop writes:

> Father Kuleszo, pastor of the Dominican church, arrived in a hurry to urge me to escape to Maisiagala (about 25 kilometers northwest of Vilnius), because he had learned that the bolsheviks were on the verge of taking me, himself, Canon Lubianiec, and Father Songin into custody. He even had horses and carriage ready for me...
>
> "And what are you going to do? Are you going to flee?"
> "I am not going to run."
> "Why, then, are you urging me to go?"
> "Your case is different, Your Excellency, you are indispensable in the diocese."
>
> My example is also indispensable for the diocese. In my absence, God knows what will happen. The fire-brands in our midst will more easily stir up riots and the people will suffer the

greatest harm. No, I shall not run. That would be unworthy of a bishop. If I am apprehended, the world will not fall apart. Then the Lord will take care of the diocese.

The Bishop writes further:

Throughout the day other people of good-will kept urging me to hide or flee to avoid bolshevik arrest. It was late in the evening when Father Milkowski came, at the insistence of some Polish ladies, to tell me that I would be taken into custody this very night. I put all my papers, documents, and assignments in order, just in case. Then I said my Rosary and peacefully retired for the night.

On March 15 two Lithuanians came to tell the Bishop that according to reliable reports the Lithuanian army would take over Vilnius on March 20. They wanted to discuss plans for a proper reception of the victorious forces and wanted the Bishop to take part. They had gone so far as to prepare a detailed program for the occasion: the traditional bread-and-salt welcome to the commandant; a procession to the Cathedral; a welcoming address, religious services, a sermon, blessing by the Bishop; a visit to the shrine of Our Lady of the Dawn Gate for the litanies and a fervorino; and then a parade to the Fort Hill for a flag-raising ceremony...

The Bishop asked these delegates to exclude him from all political ceremonies and manifestations and to remember that his primary duty was to the Church Universal. The ceremonies and demonstrations should be left to those who in reality will take control of the city. These observances will not make Vilnius Lithuanian. A bishop cannot live solely for the present moment, but must look to the future.

Not wanting to offend these people or alienate them from the Church, the Bishop promised to consult with the Lithuanian priests. In a hurried meeting with them, it was decided to await further developments.

My God, how hard is the lot of a bishop in a place like this! He is tugged and drawn in all directions. Both the Lithuanians and the Poles would like to get him on their political bandwagons. Both

sides are trying to involve him in their tangled aberrations. Please, God, help me escape these entanglements.

On March 19 the Bishop was given three days by the bolsheviks to move from the second to the third floor of his residence, taking with him his bed and nothing more... The Bishop was distressed because the third floor was not habitable. The stove did not work and there were no other facilities. He decided that he would not move, but be forcibly evicted if it were to be. News of the bolshevik action immediately swept the city.

In an attempt to avoid a possibly worse riot than in the case of Father Muckermann, the Bishop used an indirect approach to have the order countermanded. Through intermediaries, he gave a copy of the order to Kapsukas and attorney Vladas Pozela, who were displeased by it and issued a countermand on March 22. About two o'clock that night, the bolsheviks clamored at the Bishop's portals and tried to force them open. A guard told them to return at daylight. After some cursing they left.

The uneasiness in the city grew each day. A low-flying airplane dropped Lithuanian leaflets of protest against the bolsheviks. This was a new method of attack which caused more confusion. The bolsheviks retaliated by making increased arrests including a number of Polish women who were accused of belonging to the secret Patriotic League, which supposedly had been active in behalf of the Polish Legionaries and the secret Officers organization.

The expected liberation from the bolsheviks by armed intervention was sensed throughout the city. The Poles waited for the Legion and the Lithuanians waited for their army. It was curious that the Poles never mentioned a Lithuanian army, and the Lithuanian Front was understood to mean Poles and Germans. Even the bolsheviks rarely spoke of a Lithuanian army. The animosity among the nationalities was perceptible everywhere.

On March 24 another provocateur, accompanied by Canon Lubianiec, appeared on the Bishop's doorstep. His

name was Michael Zadkiewicz. He had a letter of recommendation from Father Baliulis, Dean of Vitebsk. He pictured himself as a Pole by birth, a schismatic until his conversion to Catholicism two years previously, then a Jesuit novice in St. Petersburg until the Revolution when he had joined the bolsheviks. Now he had attained a high position in the Department of Foreign Affairs and was able to travel freely across all fronts and extend travel permissions to others. He tried to give the impression that he was working hand-in-hand with Bishop Ropp, Bishop Lozinski, Father Baliulis and others. His aim was to reconcile the bolsheviks with the Catholic Church and to negotiate a decree of full freedom for it. At this moment he claimed to be in a position to import Jesuits from Warsaw to work in Vilnius or Russia.

The Bishop wrote in his journal:

> It seemed to me that he was unduly interested in finding out if there were any Jesuits here, and in exploring my views on the bolsheviks and their relations with the Church. He was a clean-shaven young man, very brisk, and from his manner of speaking he appeared to be world-wise and self-assured. His speech and facial features seemed to suggest Jewish heritage... I told this commissar that if the bolsheviks gave real freedom to the Church, I would be very happy because the present situation is unbearable. I also told him that this was not the time to import Jesuits here or to Russia. Let peace and mutual forbearance come. Then we can plan for the future.
>
> With typical brashness, he asked how to establish ties with the Holy See and if the Bishop would help him. As things stood now, he said, it would be advantageous to have a layman, meaning himself, as intermediary. The Bishop answered him that there was no need for new avenues. If the bolsheviks wanted any such contact they could apply to Rome for a representative, as in the case of Msgr. Ratti in Warsaw and Archbishop Pacelli in Munich. Then, we bishops would have direct contact and need no intermediary. In parting the Bishop told the young man, if you desire to do some good for the Church, then do what you can. We shall be happy and God will reward you.

* * *

At 5:30 on the morning of March 30 the Bishop was preparing to leave for Mass when he heard the doorbell and himself went to answer it. It was a tall bolshevik, one of those who had tried to requisition living quarters. Now he announced that the commissar, who had intended to live here, had returned from Moscow and was now at the railroad station with six of his friends and two automobiles.

The Bishop explained that the requisition had been countermanded. The caller insisted that they be housed there at least until they could find another suitable place. The Bishop saw that the man had already moved his car, loaded with gasoline tins and other luggage, into the courtyard.

The commissar arrived shortly. The Bishop showed him the revised order and suggested that some other place had been assigned to them. The official replied that he had the power to ignore any changes and requested that they be allowed to move in. The Bishop realized that the man was determined to take over the house, so he warned him that the people would resent it and could riot:

> You have the authority, and you can do as you will. I am being forced to give up my quarters. If you press me, I shall move out, but I advise you not to move in. I know the Catholic people. They will not tolerate this, and there will be trouble.

The Bishop thereupon left for church services. He had instructed Father Vaitkevicius to be calm, and, if the bolsheviks insisted on remaining there, to let them into the parlor but to watch the rest of the residence with the help of the servants. When the Bishop returned from services, about 11:30, he found the courtyard, stairs, and vestibule crowded with people. Many Lithuanians and Poles had congregated to protect the bishop's residence. The people were particularly incensed at the women of ill-repute the commissar had brought along. There was a sharp exchange of insults with the women left in the parlor by their escorts, who themselves had hurried away to avoid the gathering throng.

After a while, the Bishop talked to the people and explained the whole incident. He thanked them and asked them to leave. When the people had dispersed, the bolsheviks drove up in their automobile and the Bishop asked them to find some other place and to stop irritating the people who were again gathering. The bolsheviks drove off.

After lunch the third attempt was made to move in, but when the bolsheviks saw another crowd gathering they left after telling the cook and the servants, "We shall return, and your 'priest' will be gone."

On that same afternoon comrade Jupavicius, a Russian student, accompanied by a Polish friend called on the Bishop who asked for some identification. Jupavicius showed a letter from the Housing Authority authorizing him to investigate whether the Bishop had incited his people against the bolsheviks, and whether he had encouraged a railroad workers strike. The Bishop immediately understood what they were after. He calmly explained the whole sequence of events and the reasons for them. The investigators left.

That evening about 10 o'clock, four or five bolsheviks tried to gain entrance to the grounds on the pretext that they had a telegram to deliver. The gates were barred and the guard asked them to slip the telegram through a slit. They created a ruckus and used foul language. The Bishop heard all this and thought they would return in greater force to break in and take him into custody. Without undressing, he dozed for a while. The rest of the night was uneventful.

On March 26 the Lithuanian-White Russian Peoples Commissariate issued a decree nationalizing all private schools, forbidding religious instructions, and removing the clergy from the schools. The salaries of all the priest-teachers, even of those who taught secular subjects, were withheld for the month of March. The decree was effective as of April 1.

All those involved in any way with education hurried to Bishop Matulaitis to find out what he would do, as

though he were a magician and could make these storm clouds disappear by a sweep of his wand. The first of them, Mr. Weclawski and Mr. Dmochowski, representatives of the Polish Committee for Education, appeared on April 2. Without any preamble, they asked him directly what his plans were in the school matter. The Bishop replied that he had been carefully following the progress of events and had made a thorough study of the Church's pronouncements. In view of all this, he said that the withholding of salaries and of the subsidy were not the most essential aspects of the situation. It was much more crucial that the bolsheviks were taking away the freedom of education and would use the whole school system as a tool for bolshevik propaganda. He told them that parents were obliged in conscience to protect and boycott secularized schools. In addition, he said that the teachers ought to take a pedagogical stand against the decree.

The first of the schools to feel the effect of the decree was the Lithuanian Teachers College. Its director Joseph Kairiukstis (1855-1937) was ousted and replaced by a bolshevik. Priests were thrown out. The students protested and refused to attend classes. After the Lenten retreat they left for their homes. Since Easter was near, Lithuanian high schools decided to conclude the school year and send their students on vacation.

The Polish Committee for Education ordered all primary schools to be closed, but their high schools held classes. When the bolsheviks heard of the closings, they issued an order that all classes were to continue until Palm Sunday, April 13, but no one heeded it.

There was general confusion concerning the edict: some delayed, others looked for compromise; and all waited for the bishop to issue a pastoral letter. The Bishop conferred with Polish and Lithuanian chaplains and parent committees. He called a meeting of the Capitulars and city pastors. There was one fundamental question: should the pastoral letter be issued immediately, or later? Some of the more conservative priests thought that it should be delayed

until matters became crystallized. The more impulsive argued for immediate promulgation. The Bishop wrote in his journal:

> I told the priests that, aside from the letter itself, they are to explain from their pulpits the deeper and farreaching effects of the bolshevik aims. In a fit of impatience, Father Maciejewicz accused me and the pastors of being afraid to take a stand and do our duty. I reprimanded him gently and politely and said that no one is thinking about shirking duty, but the more important thing is the timing for making a reply.

Those who were inclined to have the letter issued immediately, were more persuasive and convinced the majority to have the letter proclaimed now, in a non-abrasive form. In response to this majority, the Bishop decided to proclaim the letter on the Sunday after Easter, April 27, but this became unnecessary because the Poles expelled the bolsheviks from Vilnius on Easter Sunday. The journal reports:

> On Holy Saturday April 19 just before 5 o'clock in the morning, I heard the sound of soldiers running through the streets of the city. When I looked out the window I saw a rather large group of armed Jewish militiamen advancing at a trot toward the Cathedral. Some Polish Legionaries followed on horseback. Returning shortly on foot, they set up machine-guns at the corner and started firing at the bolsheviks, who returned their fire from St. George Avenue and from the park near the Cathedral. Gun-fire was heard throughout the city.
>
> The Legionaries came and found many bolsheviks sleeping like sheep. I knew that the bolsheviks were not too well organized, but I did not think they would be so taken by surprise. The skirmish went on April 19-21. The Poles took over the city.
>
> It was noted that the Poles fought bravely and the bolshevik party members resisted, but the Red Army troops were reluctant to fight and either surrendered or escaped. The city was devastated: broken windows, ruined roofs, and damaged buildings. Street battles are an awful sight. Many innocent people were killed. The Catholics helped the Poles in opposing the bolsheviks, while the Jews seemed more partial to the bolsheviks.

* * *

On April 21 General Edward Rydz-Smigly (1886-1942) of the victorious Polish forces sent his respects to the Bishop through his Adjutant Casimir Switalski. In the evening the Adjutant returned and asked if the General could call the next morning at 9 o'clock. The Bishop graciously agreed. In the afternoon several ladies of the Polish Patriotic League had come to demand that the Bishop conduct burial services for the slain Poles. They wanted him to head the funeral procession to the Cathedral, pontificate at the Mass, and accompany the cortege to the cemetery. When he asked, they told him that about sixty had been slain.

The ladies were quite upset. The Bishop told them that he would consult with his Chapter and do what was proper. The ladies had been sent by Father Kuleszo, an ardent Polish nationalist and activist. Other petitioners arrived and asked that on April 23 the Bishop conduct a solemn service of thanksgiving for the liberation of Vilnius.

That same evening two representatives of the Jewish community, Rabbi Rubinstein and Dr. Schabad, complained to the Bishop that the Polish Legionaries had arrested vast numbers of Jews, subjected them to beatings and torture, plundered many of their stores and in making raids robbed them of their money. In particular, they wanted the Bishop to intercede for two of their prominent leaders, Leo Joffe and Samuel Tscharny. The Bishop said that he would do all he could for them. When Switalski came, the Bishop asked that these two men be released. The next day during his visit, General Rydz-Smigly said that these two Jews had already been released and had returned to their homes. Later the Bishop found out that this was not so.

In the meeting with the Chapter on the religious ceremonies, the Bishop decided that he would gladly conduct the church services but would not take part in any political manifestations.

On April 22 Mr. Jerzy Osmolowski met with the Bishop and told him that he had been appointed by the Polish government in Warsaw to administer the political

affairs in Lithuania. He said his title was "Commissar for the Eastern Provinces" (Vilnius region and White Russia), and at once proceeded to outline his political program. When he finished, the Bishop told him:

> I do not involve myself in any politicking. I can only state the wishes of the Lithuanians and describe their perplexing situation. My only desire is to reconcile and unite the people in my jurisdiction. In my opinion, there could be peace if the Polish government would abide by the principles of justice and humanitarianism and recognize the rights of Lithuanians and White Russians. The best solution is to let the populace call a convention in Vilnius to delineate the proper relations between neighbors.

The Bishop suggested that these matters should properly be taken up with Kaunas; and that presently Michael Birziska, the president of the city's Provisional Lithuanian Committee is in Vilnius and could be of help to him. The Bishop asked again not to be involved in any form of political partisanship because of his position, adding that in general he was opposed to involvement in political affairs by the clergy.

While visiting with the Bishop, the Adjutant Switalski had mentioned that Joseph Pilsudski, Poland's head of state, would soon come to Vilnius. He discussed their plans to meet him and wanted the Bishop to take part. The Bishop replied that this was a concern for the civilian authorities, and that bishops, by custom, received Catholic rulers only in the Cathedral, and that Mr. Pilsudski was not yet the ruler of Lithuania.

Mr. Pilsudski arrived on the evening of April 22. People were waiting at the shrine of Our Lady of the Dawn Gate to greet him, but his entourage did not stop and did not even lift their hats in passing. The journal contains this comment:

> Reports have it that Pilsudski is a socialist and irreligious, and that he has left his wife and taken a Jewess as consort. I don't know what the real truth is, but these rumors came from Warsaw.

On the following day the Bishop pontificated at a Mass of thanksgiving. Father Maciejewicz gave a totally political sermon in which he berated the foes of Poland.

> Some church-goers were scandalized that during the Mass, Pilsudski, a socialist, was accorded an incensation and offered relics to kiss. After the singing of the "Te Deum" and "Boze cos Polske," Pilsudski and I with others stopped in St. Casimir's chapel for prayer as had been previously requested. After the ceremonies, Pilsudski came to my residence for a formal visit and I at once returned his visit according to protocol. He excused himself that on his arrival he did not know it was expected that he stop at the Shrine. I reassured him that I understood and also tried to correct the reproaches made by Father Maciejewicz in his sermon.

On April 24 Mr. Ostrejko, together with one of the Polish landed gentry, reported to the Bishop that a large store of food had fallen into the hands of the Legionaries when the bolsheviks had fled. The High Command wanted a part of this distributed to the needy of the city. The Bishop was asked to form a committee for this, with the condition that Jews and non-residents receive nothing. The Bishop categorically refused to be involved and told them:

> You can punish the Jews if you want, but it is entirely improper for me as a bishop. Also, in the distribution of food to the needy I cannot see why non-residents should be excluded. Every hungry or starving human being is worthy of compassion regardless of nationality or religion. And lest you people may think that I am refusing offhandedly to cooperate, I shall take it up with my Diocesan Chapter.

The Chapter was of the opinion that the Bishop cannot form such a committee, but suggested that the offer be made to Fathers Kretowicz, Kuleszo, Olszanski, a welfare group, or some other organizations. When the Bishop relayed this decision, Ostrejko was angry and said that the Military Command might refuse to release food to anyone. The Bishop replied:

> I cannot help this, that is their affair. My first concern is that the Church not be accused of intolerance and that I not bring upon

> myself the antipathy of the people... Later, the above priests reported that no one had approached them in the matter.

On April 25 Father Leopold Chomski came to the Bishop with some criticisms. After apologizing for speaking frankly, he said the priests held it amiss that the Bishop had appointed Lithuanian Father Peter Kraujalis instead of a Pole to care for the spiritual needs of the wounded Legionaries. The Bishop was already alienating the priests and the people. The Bishop must remember that in his diocese only one-sixth of the populace is Lithuanian and that the White Russians can be considered Poles for all practical purposes. Furthermore, another widespread charge is that the closest to him in his official family are Lithuanians, and that Father Kukta was an unduly frequent visitor, most likely as an informer. But the most serious charge is that the Bishop has not chosen qualified Consultors.

The Bishop listened calmly and expressed astonishment that the priests had cause to make these charges. He had never hurt any of them by word or action. He always had time for each of them and heard them out fully. When he requested that the Dean or his assistant furnish him with information about diocesan matters, he always brought them up with the Chapter for resolution. However, he was aware that the priests often acted behind the Bishop's back. From this it appeared that apart from the Capitular Canons there was a second and secret Chapter for the pursuit of political maneuvering. He had appointed Father Kraujalis to be hospital chaplain because Father had already been deeply involved in that work with the injured Legionaries. If the Poles honestly wanted to live in peace with the Lithuanians, they would do well to practice a similar fraternal charity.

The Bishop surmised, and later found out that it was true, that Father Chomski had been sent by the priests of the Polish Narodowa Demokracja faction.

> The leaders, Lubianiec, Songin, Kuleszo, Maciejewicz, were too cunning to come themselves, so they sent Father Chomski. In concluding the interview I told this priest that such was the fate of a bishop; frequently he becomes prey to priests for sharpening their teeth. This is sad because it is a sign that they lack the spirit of Christ. It is even more sad that these politicizers try to enmesh the bishop in their political intrigues and thus incite the animosity of even the uneducated masses against him. Let them do what they want, but I shall hold fast to the banner of Christ and His ideals and continue to further the Church's mission.
>
> When you priests will be endangered because of your politicking, you will be able to flee, but I will be expected to remain at my post and that is exactly what I intend to do. If it becomes necessary to suffer, so be it. The frequent changes of government in Vilnius through armed force have been short-lived, but each made attempts to draw me into political whirlpools. Thank God, I was able to resist their lures and will continue to avoid and evade their blandishments. Lord, send me truly Christ-like priests!

In a meeting with the Dean and Vice-Dean in the city, he asked again that they keep him informed on all parish matters. He told them that Mr. Pilsudski had requested that the Polish soldiers be allowed to attend Mass at the Shrine on Sunday at 9 o'clock. The Bishop assigned the Dean to be celebrant of that High Mass.

The Bishop was invited on April 26 to a large farewell party for Mr. Pilsudski. When Pilsudski and his escort arrived, the representative of the citizenry of Vilnius made a formal address and presented him with the keys to the City. The Bishop spoke briefly and outlined the troubles of the Church in Vilnius, thanked Mr. Pilsudski, and expressed the hope that the Church would be able to function freely.

That evening Commissar Osmolowski and his assistant, Ladislaus Raczkiewicz, reported to the Bishop their inability to come to an agreement with the Lithuanians. Because he was on his way back to Warsaw, he asked the Bishop to forbid his priests to reclaim any Orthodox churches. In considerable surprise, the Bishop replied that never had he allowed churches built by the Russian Orthodox or Uniates to be pre-empted; but the churches

built by the Catholics and then taken by the Orthodox were still the property of the Catholics. The Bishop made a special point to warn him that if any attempts were made to deprive the Catholics of these churches, there could be riots.

Some representatives of the Jewish community came again to the Bishop and related how they were being terrorized by the Legionaries with arrests, harassment, and theft of property. They asked his intervention. He promised that he would try to help, and told them that he had heard similar complaints from Lithuanians, who in addition were being spied on and denounced. The April 27 entry reads:

> When the Polish Legionaries took over, the whole atmosphere of the city became Polish. The Jews went into hiding in their homes and rarely dared to appear in public. The Lithuanians likewise huddled together in downcast sadness. The Legionaries gave arms to civilians and even to teenage boys. The White Eagle emblems were displayed in every possible form, and it was required that the Polish flag be flown throughout the city... This was so reminiscent of the days of the bolsheviks when the atmosphere was so completely Russian that Russian was heard on the city streets; men wore Russian caps, and even Polish landowners donned them to conceal themselves from the bolsheviks. Then the Russian and Jewish elements had predominated.

While the Polish rejoicing was going on in Vilnius, exploding shells from bolshevik mortars began to fall on the city. This created panic. Polish patriots, especially the priests among them, began to flee from the city. More details are found in the journal:

> Father Ambrose Jakavonis from Gerveciai (about 50 kilometers east of Vilnius), came to see me on April 28 and told me that the bolsheviks were already battling the Poles around Vileika. That night the bolsheviks almost re-captured Vilnius. They had already overrun suburban Liponka. Confusion blanketed the city. The well-to-do began fleeing Vilnius for Warsaw and Grodno. The Legionaries armed all the men to assist them in the fighting. The sound of falling shells echoed from the walls of the buildings. Fright descended on the inhabitants who did not know what to do or how to escape.

Early the next morning Msgr. Michalkevicius came to the Bishop, complained that his nerves were giving way and he thought it well that he go to a sanitarium in Warsaw. The Bishop saw his condition, recommended that he go and gave him a celebret.

The same was the case with Father Songin, co-editor with Father Maciejewicz of the Vilnius Daily. He asked to go to Warsaw because as a Polish political activist and publicist he would find it particularly uncomfortable once the bolsheviks returned. Permission was granted.

The Bishop's secretary, Canon Steckiewicz, had heart trouble and complained of pains and insomnia. He asked to go somewhere for relief. The Bishop allowed this really sick man to leave.

The city began to empty. A Polish army chaplain, Father Baran, told the Bishop that there was no immediate danger because the bolsheviks had been repulsed. However, the Poles might have to retreat. He tried to persuade the Bishop to prepare to flee. The Bishop told him that he had no intention of fleeing and did not want to hear of any danger. "I am completely resigned to the Providence of God and I shall remain. The rest is up to God."

The noise of military movements filled the night. There were skirmishes on the outskirts of the city. Soldiers marching on foot, and cars and trucks driving by could be seen from the Bishop's windows. It was impossible to sleep because of the bustle and clatter. Father Zarnowski, administrator of St. James parish, came early in the morning to ask permission to leave because he was in mortal danger. The Legionaries had set up a machine-gun nest in the tower of his church and were firing continually. The Bishop understood that the bolsheviks would single this priest out for revenge and allowed him to leave. The Bishop heard that many other priests, especially those who were known as activists, were leaving without permission.

Throughout the morning, the people fled from the city, carrying their belongings as best they could. The Polish soldiers among them were cursed for having come

and caused so much upheaval and hardship. In the afternoon things quieted down. The bolshevik offensive bogged down, as the tide of battle favored the Poles still in control of the city.

Father Joseph Tumas had fallen into disfavor with the Poles. Msgr. Michalkevicius on one occasion had told the Bishop that the Poles were angry and scandalized that Fathers Tumas and Abaravicius always seemed to be in contact with the Jews in connivance against the Poles. The Bishop called Father Tumas and asked if there was any truth in this. Completely startled by these far-fetched accusations, Tumas replied that he had had no meetings with the Jews, that Father Abaravicius was only a visitor and took no part in ethnic matters. It might be, he explained to the Bishop, that some Lithuanian laymen met with the Jews because of Polish oppression and so were forced to seek common cause together with the Jews and White Russians.

The Bishop mentioned earlier complaints that Father Tumas wore civilian dress and that his colorful jacket caused a few lifted eyebrows. Father Tumas explained that this was the raiment with which he had returned from Russia and he had no other. He was saving his tattered cassock to wear in church for Mass. The Bishop agreed that the cassock was tattered because he had seen it himself. Knowing well that this man was a true idealist, the Bishop told him to pay no attention to these criticisms and to dress as he did until the Lord provided better times.

In reality, it was not so much the style of dress of Father Tumas that distressed the Poles as much as his Lithuanian activities. Father Tumas was editor of the Lithuanian daily "Independent Lithuania" which the Provisional Lithuanian Committee of Vilnius started to publish on April 25, 1919. He received no salary and told the Bishop that he had only 600 rubles left. When that was gone he might have to leave Vilnius...

In all the confusion with the clash of arms and the variety of political combinations, the fate of Vilnius

remained uncertain. Only one thing was clear. No matter how or with whom negotiations could be undertaken, the Poles would not voluntarily give up Vilnius. Although there had been some negotiations between Warsaw and Kaunas, nothing had been accomplished. Warsaw kept sending administrators to Vilnius and Lithuania under an assortment of titles, even though Poland itself was not yet organized. In Warsaw they knew of three Polish governments: that of Roman Dmowski and Ignac Paderewski, the musician-statesman, who had their seat in Paris; another was that of Joseph Pilsudski who called himself Chief of State; and the third, the Polish Diet-Parliament. The strongest of these, naturally, was that of Pilsudski who was supported by the army.

On May 2 Archbishop Teodorowicz and Father Lutoslawski, a member of the Polish Parliament, met with Bishop Matulaitis. This priest was a confirmed National Democrat and a man of positive opinions who stated bluntly that Vilnius and the enclaves of White Russian Catholics must be annexed to Poland because the White Russians are only a potential, not a real nation. He said that it was the intention of the Parliament to force the Kaunas Lithuanians to throw in their lot with the Poles; and if they refused, they could keep for themselves the Duchy of Samogitia. Archbishop Teodorowicz listened in silence because he could get the full import of the conversation. In his customary deliberative manner, Bishop Matulaitis tried to soften this tirade. He stated that, if he knew the Lithuanians at all, he was sure that they would lean more toward the program of Osmolowski and Pilsudski.

Father Lutoslawski was quick to reply that the majority of the Parliament in Warsaw looked at the political views of these two men as a betrayal of Polish national interests. The Bishop's reflection on all this is recorded in the journal:

> The drive by the Polish national extremists to deprive Lithuania of Vilnius, and to absorb other Polonized areas of Lithuania, and to denationalize White Russians, cannot lead to any

> good. 'Justitia elevat gentes — justice exalts nations.' In the words of Sacred Scripture, justice and truth are the foundation stones of great and powerful nations.

The commemoration of the 1791 Polish Constitution fell on May 4. Dr. Weslawski had asked the Bishop to pontificate at a Solemn Mass in the Cathedral as a part of the celebration and that Father Kuleszo give the sermon. The Bishop said that he would take this up with the Chapter. The Bishop himself pontificated and Archbishop Teodorowicz preached. The sermon was an oratorical display of political generalities, hardly understood by most of the congregation, except for a prayerful appeal to the Blessed Virgin at its conclusion. The Bishop invited Archbishop Teodorowicz and Father Lutoslawski to lunch and from the conversation it appeared that the two of them favored Polish annexation plans.

After Father Lutoslawski left, Bishop Matulaitis inquired of the Archbishop about the existing conditions of the Church in Poland and about the policy of the Parliament concerning Church properties. In reply he was told that the Apostolic Visitator, Msgr. Ratti, wanted the Polish government to deal directly with the Holy See, but the Polish bishops had asked to be allowed to negotiate first with the Parliament in which there was a preponderance of rightists who would favor the Church. However, the parliament had not as yet prepared a Constitution, so the Church affairs would be kept in abeyance.

The Bishop bade farewell on May 4 to the Archbishop and the Members of Parliament, who returned to Warsaw.

On May 9 the Bishop called a meeting of the Chapter. The most important matter to be considered was Commissar Jamont's letter on the Catholic churches that had been pre-empted by the Orthodox. Jamont asked that priests not repossess these churches without official permission. The Chapter decided that a copy of this letter be sent to all priests, who would send particulars about such churches to the Chancery Office. The Chancery

would then become the sole agent to take up these matters with the government.

The Bishop also asked about the advisability of making episcopal visitations of the parishes. It was decided that under existing conditions, the visitations would be practically impossible.

A further matter of business was on the resumption of classes in the seminary after the Easter break. Because of the food shortage and the uncertainty of future supplies, it was decided to suspend classes for now and to resume them somewhat earlier in the Fall.

Then the Bishop asked about paying a personal visit to Msgr. Ratti in Warsaw to consult about a whole series of important diocesan matters. There was wholehearted agreement. Without delay, the administration of the diocese was left to Msgr. John Sadowski, and the Bishop with Father Vaitkevicius left for Warsaw on May 11, 1919. Just before they left, Father Kuleszo asked the Bishop to sign the memorandum that was read when Pilsudski was given the keys of the city. The Bishop refused because this was strictly a political matter, and told him:

> When the Paris Peace Conference decides the fate of nations, I will undoubtedly try to be a good subject of the government which will be recognized. At this time I must remain neutral and be a bishop to everyone.

There is a hiatus in the journal from May 10 to November 19, 1919. A comment explained:

> I have not written for a long time, possibly with the intention that I would later record what was memorable and important. I often felt exhausted, depressed, and overburdened.

* * *

Bishop Matulaitis was burdened not only with the current political crises, but also by administrative duties some of them long neglected, which cried out for immediate attention. He saw as his most important duty at

the time the safeguarding of the Church from incursions on its independence and its goods. His inability to make parish visitations bothered him greatly. Then, the fact could no longer be ignored that the standards at the seminary had slipped considerably.

The roots of the Vilnius Seminary can be traced back to the 16th century. Previously there had been no seminaries as such. Candidates for the priesthood were educated in cathedral or monastery schools. Some candidates had private tutors or were taught by pastors, but all had to take standard examinations before ordination. Vocations to the priesthood also came from some Lithuanian young men who went abroad for advanced education to the universities of Prague, Italy and Cracow. This was true also in the College and Institute conducted by the Jesuits in Vilnius.

In the course of getting acquainted with the various institutions in the diocese, Bishop Matulaitis visited the Seminary. On February 24, 1919 he sat in on the classes in Scripture and Moral Theology. Traditionally, seminary lectures were given in Latin. He found that the lecturing and questioning were done exclusively in Polish, although the textbooks were in Latin.

> I shall have to see, I said to myself, if the seminarians know any Latin. I heard priests complaining that the seminary was completely Polonized, that Polish alone was used, and that Latin was ignored.

The Bishop continued his inspection of the seminary on March 8.

> I noticed that the professors were tardy, cut short their lectures, and sometimes skipped them completely. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon I found only one professor lecturing. The others were absent because it was the first day back after a short vacation, and on such days the practice was 'prima lectio aut brevis aut nulla' — a truncated or no lecture.

Taking what time he could spare, the Bishop repeatedly visited the seminary March 10-22. He noted that some

professors came to class unprepared. The professor of Canon Law used a Polish text. In the senior year this same professor and the students used the breviary for the course in Patrology. When students made mistakes in translation, the professor also made errors in correcting them. Church History was taught by a professor who used only his own notes and whose presentation was faulty and boring. He was, however, very adept in questioning the students.

Worried about the future of the Church in Vilnius where the seminarians were getting deficient training, the Bishop wrote:

> My greatest concern now is to gradually put the seminary in order, to make it truly catholic, to rid it of the dregs of national chauvinism. My greatest desire is that seminarians after ordination would carry with them into the world an apostolic spirit like to St. Paul's, who made no distinctions among those to be saved. As I see it, the endemic disease of the diocese is national chauvinism, and the seminary has been affected by it.

In his efforts to get better acquainted with the interior life of the seminary, he ordered the rector to send deacons to serve his Masses. The first one, Sztafanski, came on March 16. The young man was a White Russian. After Mass in his chapel, the Bishop invited the deacon to breakfast. The conversation turned to the relations between the different nationalities in the seminary. When asked about the number of White Russians in the seminary, the deacon replied that he really did not know because White Russians concealed their identity by registering as Poles for fear of being harassed. This was true of the lower classmen, he said, but more so as they neared ordination.

The Bishop assured him that no one would be faulted because of nationality or language. He wanted only priests to exercise true apostolic zeal, and would gladly support the efforts of all nationalities to adhere more closely to the Church.

The next morning Deacon Alexander Hanusevicius came to serve Mass. At first he hesitated to admit that he was a White Russian, but later described how hard it was for him to

give religious instructions in Polish to White Russian children in the parish of Holszany. In his journal the Bishop makes this comment, "And the Dean of Asmena had told me that it was a purely Polish parish."

On March 30 the server was John Vaisnora, a Lithuanian. When he entered the seminary he knew no Polish. On his first day he asked the doorman in Russian where he could find the Rector. The surprised doorkeeper asked if he were a Catholic and then offered his opinion that without any knowledge of Polish he would not be accepted. Vaisnora was accepted, nevertheless, and had a very difficult time in learning Polish. His written assignments in that language were given a mark of triple zero to which the teacher added public derision. His Polish room-mates subjected him to constant mockery and insult.

Vaisnora found this unbearable. He asked Canon Lubianiec if he could share a room with a Pole who had offered to tutor him. The answer was: "You knew this was a Polish seminary. If you did not know the language you should have gone to Kaunas. Now you will just have to bear it."

Thinking that he would be considered a Lithomaniac and that his chances here were poor, Vaisnora decided to go to Kaunas. The Rector, Canon Uszyllo, encouraged him to remain. In time he learned Polish. The Bishop asked him how many Lithuanians were in his class. The seminarian replied that there were only two who openly admitted to their heritage. Three others were registered as Poles. It was customary, he said, for Lithuanians who knew Polish to register as Poles so as to avoid the embarrassment and harassment of being termed Lithomaniacs.

The Mass server for March 21 was Deacon Alexander Syczewski. The Bishop writes: "When I asked him if he were a White Russian, he replied, 'I can be a Pole or a White Russian as the circumstances dictate.' This incident shows the kind of training the seminary provided."

On March 22 seminarian Edimtas hesitated to admit that he was a Lithuanian and said only that he knew both

languages. The Bishop told him that he could choose whatever nationality he wanted, but after ordination he was to use the language of the people of the parish to which he would be assigned. The people were not to be coerced to learn a foreign language. The Bishop added that Jesus sends us to preach the Gospel and not to teach languages.

In a word, the Bishop tried to get on over-all picture of the seminary so as to eliminate abuses and to actuate a formation program that would produce priest apostles and not nationalists.

It appears that the hiatus in the Bishop's journal from May 10 to November 19 was due to the incursions of the city by Polish armed forces. This was a period of great confusion and political tensions. Nothing was stable and each hour carried its own threat.

Bishop Matulaitis remained composed in that turmoil, as befitted a true religious. He looked at, weighed and measured things in the light of eternity, but kept his feet firmly on the ground where the Church and the faithful lived and decided their destinies. One of the reasons why the written record of events was interrupted may have been the continuing raids and searches. As a sign of his practical awareness of things, he transferred all the more important documents to a safe depository, possibly Trinapolis, the old residence of the bishops of Vilnius. When the journal was resumed, the November 19 entry reads:

> Today I left for Bialystok to participate on the morrow in ceremonies inaugurating the nationalization of the High Schools. The train was very late. Railroad schedules were uncertain and there was a shortage of fuel. The train from Warsaw was to arrive in Vilnius about midnight, but actually pulled in about 9:00 a.m. and left at 12:30 p.m. The cars were not heated and were filled beyond capacity. The officers and soldiers were poorly dressed and stomped their feet trying to keep warm. After many unscheduled stops we reached Bialystok about 10:00 p.m. where we were met by the clergy.

On the following day there was a Pontifical Low Mass so that the students could be spared the biting cold. In the afternoon the inauguration ceremonies took place in the High School. The Bishop addressed the students and gave a brief history of the Polish schools, stressing their traditional practice of combining education with religious values and character development. There were other speakers. The School Inspector from Warsaw represented the Minister of Education and gave a good speech.

The weather was somewhat milder on November 21 when the Bishop and several seminarians took a train to Grodno. They found seats in a car that was stuffy and uncomfortably overheated by an iron stove. They reached Grodno about 7:00 p.m. and were met by the clergy and several city officials. On the following day the Bishop visited a number of Catholic institutions: schools, orphanages, the Franciscan monastery, the convent of the Sisters of Nazareth, and individual priests.

In the words of the Bishop, November 23 was a "busy day." Beginning at 9:30 a.m., he confirmed more than 500 children, then celebrated Mass and preached. In the afternoon there was a visit to the girls high school, conducted by the Sisters of Nazareth, and an appearance at a meeting of the Christian Democrats. Without a break, he returned to the church and confirmed a group of women. After this he gave a conference to the nuns who were specially dedicated to work among the peasants.

On the last day of his stay at Grodno November 24, he celebrated Mass for the high school students and confirmed them. In the afternoon he confirmed adult men.

These five days were very tiring for the Bishop, but he was exhilarated in being able to escape the oppressive atmosphere of Vilnius and to indulge in the apostolate which was particularly close to his heart. The return trip was again an exhausting experience in the crowded and suffocating train. He arrived in Vilnius about midnight.

Next day, November 25, the Bishop presided at a

reception of vows for three Benedictine Sisters in St. Catherine's convent.

December 1 was the first anniversary of his consecration as bishop, but the observance was somewhat somber. Bishop Matulaitis was not given to complain, but his journal gives some evidence of heartaches:

> Msgr. Michalkevicius celebrated Mass and afterward there were the customary greetings by priests. It has been a difficult year with so many crises and the future seems to hold more in store... On December 8 I observed the anniversary of my ingress by pontificating at Mass and preaching. This year has been a true Way of the Cross, but God be praised! Mary, Immaculately Conceived, protect me and the diocese.

* * *

The town of Giedraiciai somewhat to the north of Vilnius is an old Lithuanian settlement. The place is mentioned as a battlefield in the 14th and 15th century chronicles of the Teutonic Knights of the Cross.

Except for some Polonized land-owners, the people were Lithuanians. After the Polish forces occupied Vilnius in April of 1919, they soon took control of Giedraiciai. Since there was a mixture in the parish, it was customary to conduct church services, preach, cathechize and sing in both languages. When Bishop Matulaitis left for Warsaw on May 19 to visit Msgr. Ratti, the Polish military took advantage of his absence to forbid Lithuanian hymns in the church and even threatened to forcibly expel the Lithuanian pastor. This was the beginning of a series of disturbances and brawls in the church thereby desecrating it. The agitators were supported by the Polish soldiers and militia who arrested objecting Lithuanians. When the Bishop returned, his efforts to bring peace and order failed. He placed an interdict on the church forbidding all services and the ministration of sacraments. On December 13 he called a meeting of the Chapter, and writes:

> I conferred, or more explicitly, I asked for their advice in appointing Diocesan Judges, Advocates, and Consultors, because

the Curia was not yet complete and I was not sufficiently acquainted with the priests to decide on suitable candidates. We also discussed the canonical implications of the Giedraiciai affair. I proposed that the offenders be obliged to make a three-day retreat and to fast one Friday as a canonical penance. Because the culprits were Poles I suggested that the retreat be in Polish. The Chapter agreed, but made the stipulation that Father Vaitkevicius not be the Retreat Master because they thought he could not be impartial. Therefore, a Franciscan, Father Haula, would conduct the retreat after Epiphany. The Giedraiciai incident is in the Chancery records, but they do not tell the whole story. Delegates of Poles from Giedraiciai called on me three times.

First they demanded that Lithuanian be banned in the church and that the pastor, Father Slabsinskas, be removed. I replied that I would not change the order in the church as long as there was a war-time status. As far as the pastor was concerned, they were to present specific grievances and I would investigate. The delegation was intractable.

Father Slabsinskas had described the situation to me. The Polish Legionaries and police had intruded in church matters and were abetted by the Frontier Guard who had incited the people. I thought it better to wait until Polish tempers cooled off. They even brought me a census report taken by the Poles, showing that there was only a handful of Lithuanian parishioners. I earnestly asked them to be patient because in possibly a short time the war-time conditions would be over and national alignments would be settled.

On the second occasion, these same delegates, not only demanded again that Lithuanian be banned, but also made specific accusations against the pastor. I promised that I would appoint a committee to investigate their charges. The Lithuanians I spoke with assured me that the charges were fabricated and that the schedule of religious services was equitable.

Shortly, I left for Gniezno to attend a Bishops' Conference. In my absence, the Poles, emboldened by the soldiers, seized and evicted the pastor. It was rumored that other Lithuanian priests and I would receive the same treatment. This was the beginning of open warfare against me by the Poles. They wrote scurrilous articles attacking me. The leaders were the National Democrats and the Frontier Guard. In this way they thought they could intimidate me and the Lithuanian clergy.

On my return, the same Polish delegation appeared. I told them that their action was a serious sin and that those who took part in the seizure and eviction of priests are excommunicated. When they asked for yet another meeting, I refused because they

would not listen to reason and were insolent in their demands. At the instigation of the Frontier Guard, they even sent delegates to the Papal Nuncio in Warsaw. In addition they had sent written complaints and accusations to him.

In fulfillment of my promise, I sent Fathers Kraujalis and Milkowski to investigate the parish in Giedraiciai. They found that the Lithuanians were terrorized and that most of them had declared themselves Poles out of fear. Two were arrested for openly stating that they were Lithuanians. Their investigation showed that Father Slabsinskas' only fault was his stern behavior. The other charges were groundless.

Among those who had gone to Warsaw to see the Nuncio, were delegates of three other parishes: Inturke, Moletai, and Videniskiai. The charges and demands were the same, especially in the case of the pastor in Inturke. Newly ordained Polish Father Mozejko was going to that parish and I asked him to make a factual finding in the case. He reported that one of the accusers, Mr. Ciesiulis, was completely untrustworthy. When the Germans had been in power he had sided with them, and now he was an ardent Pole. The leader of the trouble-makers, Mackevicius, was less than creditable. He had been a vagrant for some time somewhere in Russia and now claimed to be a member of the Frontier Guard.

When I returned from Grodno, this same Mackevicius and two others came to demand that I make changes in Inturke and remove the pastor. I told them that I would not make any changes in war-time and asked them to settle down and stop agitating the people. If they had cause against their priest I would institute a canonical trial. It was then that they threatened to deal with their pastor as had been done in Giedraiciai.

When you speak this way, I retorted, then you are not Catholics and possibly even bolsheviks. I refuse to have any dealings with people of your ilk, and I told them to leave. They hurried to Msgr. Michalkevicius, who in turn came to me and suggested that the matter should be more fully investigated and that I relent. I told him that the affairs in Inturke had already been properly appraised by Father Mozejko, and that I was determined not to make any changes in these uncertain times. If I were to start banning the Lithuanian language in churches here, then on the other side of the line of demarcation the Polish language might also suffer discrimination.

After all, it is necessary to hold to truth and justice. It is evident that the census reports they brought are meaningless. In this situation it is impossible to make changes because this would create a chaos in all mixed parishes. We are not at all sure to whom

these territories will be given by the Treaty, and the short-sighted policy 'cujus regio, ejus religio' cannot be exercised by the Church. Let them expel the clergy and do what they want, even as I was threatened by the Giedraiciai trouble-makers, but I cannot abandon the principles of truth.

I am convinced that taking a firm stand now will devolve to the eventual good of the Church and even of the Polish element. If these areas are not annexed to Poland, then possibly I may even have to defend the rights of Poles in the churches. I told him also that we must endure this epidemic of forcible evictions of pastors. An important principle comes into play: who actually governs the Church, the bishop and his lawfully appointed priests, or irresponsible brawlers? If any priests are physically abused and evicted I will not hesitate to place personal interdicts on the offenders.

On the evening of December 13 Mr. Alexander Meysztowicz (1864-1943) came to see the Bishop. Bishop Matulaitis had heard about him from Bishop O'Rourke who had told him that Meysztowicz was a Polish activist in Lithuania and that he was in favor of reconciliation with Lithuania and of its independence.

We had a lengthy conversation. His opinion was that Greater Lithuania be restored with its parliament in Vilnius, but that military and trade ties be kept with Poland. He was very critical of the Polish officials in Lithuania. He explained that the local people originally had great trust in the Poles because they were more than tired of the bolsheviks. However, the Poles did not know how to take advantage of this. Now that they have plundered and wronged the people, they are planning a plebiscite, which is a very weak project.

It is hard to say just how sincere Mr. Meysztowicz was. In a few days an "open letter" appeared in the newspaper 'Nasz Kraj' attacking the Bishop in the matter of the parishes and Lithuanian clergy. It gave the impression of representing the voice of all the people, not just the Poles. The letter was full of lies and distortions. It mentioned parish committees, but no one had heard of any parishes electing such committees. The Bishop inquired of his priests. None of them knew of such elections. From the manner in which the Bishop refuted the insinuations in the

letter, as reported in his journal, one can judge the content and intent.

> I warned and forbade all the priests, both Lithuanian and Polish, to get involved in the vortex of politics. Certain priests were being attacked unjustly. The arrangement of services in the churches was already established in the time of Bishop Ropp, and Msgr. Michalkevicius continued this order on the basis of census rolls which had been verified and made public by the various committees. Therefore, there is no reason for changes.

The outbursts against the Bishop were not limited to Vilnius. Repercussions were felt in Warsaw where many philippics were heard on the floor of the Parliament. The Polish Government put pressure on the Papal Nuncio Ratti who wrote to Bishop Matulaitis that it might be better to make some concessions to the Poles and eliminate the uproar caused by one parish. The Bishop replied politely that the Nuncio might consider using his own rights in making the parish a personal responsibility, but that he himself as Bishop of Vilnius could not act any differently. The Nuncio apologized by saying that he had only made a suggestion and did not intend to interfere with the governing of the diocese.

This first year of his episcopacy, as the Bishop himself recorded, was one of continuous suffering and trial. The following years were not any better. During that first year he experienced the opposition of the local clergy and the Poles in general to his person. The successive occupiers of the city and their governments imposed on him the formidable burden of constantly defending the Church and the innocent victims against their attacks. This year crystallized the Bishop's life course. Everyone became convinced that he would not be entangled in politics and nationalistic conflicts, and that his passion for justice, equality, and amity was for all men.

When Pilsudski came the first time to Vilnius, the Poles then experienced the Bishop's intransigence in embracing their cause. Therefore, the Bishop was to be

considered their enemy. This was also the attitude of his closest co-workers, the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius.

* * *

Two stalwarts of the Church left a deep impression on the history of Lithuania. Achille Ratti was Apostolic Visitator, Papal Nuncio, and later Pope Pius XI. George Matulaitis was the Reformer of the Marian Fathers Congregation, Bishop of Vilnius, and Apostolic Visitator to Lithuania. Their acquaintanceship anteceded their meeting in

Most Rev. Achille Ratti as Papal Nuncio to Poland and Apostolic Visitator to Lithuania, later Pope Pius XI

person. They began to correspond as World War I was ending and the former political structure of Europe began to disintegrate.

The war-time Pope was Benedict XV, noted as an apostle of peace and justice. The aims of his Pontificate were to end the armed conflict, assuage the atrocities of war, care for the victims of war, and work for lasting peace.

Concerned with the plight of the Church in Eastern and Northern Europe, he appointed Achille Ratti Apostolic Visitator for the Church in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and parts of Finland and Russia, and he chose a Marian religious priest, George Matulaitis, as Bishop of Vilnius.

When did these two men first meet? In various memoirs, periodicals, and even in some books, the impression is given that they met in Warsaw when Msgr. Ratti arrived. Father Matulaitis had spent the war-years there in religious, pastoral, and charitable activities. The inference is that they became personal friends at that time. Indeed, there was even an unfounded rumor that Matulaitis had conducted the retreat for Msgr. Ratti prior to his consecration as Archbishop.

Although all this appears natural, possible and believable, the calendar proves that they did not meet at that time. Actually, Father Matulaitis left Warsaw for Mariampole on March 1, 1918 and the Apostolic Visitator did not arrive until May 29.

Before leaving for Poland, there is no doubt that Msgr. Ratti was supplied by the Vatican with information about the Superior General of the Marians as a candidate for the bishopric of Vilnius. In the summer and fall of 1918, the Visitator received letters from Father Matulaitis asking to be spared the bishopric of Vilnius, but Msgr. Ratti did not answer because he knew that he could not change the Pope's mind. He became involved only when he forwarded the telegram of November 11, 1918, instructing Father Matulaitis to make arrangements for immediate consecration as bishop.

Their first meeting actually took place on May 11, 1919 when Bishop Matulaitis came to see him in Warsaw about the affairs of his diocese. It was not long after this meeting that the Apostolic Visitator went to Vilnius privately. As the Bishop's guest, he had opportunity to learn at first-hand the conditions of the diocese and the plight of its bishop. It was then that he began to explore the possibilities of making a visit to Kaunas.

Bishop Matulaitis wrote a letter to Bishop Karevicius informing him that "while in Vilnius the Apostolic Visitator asked me to write to Your Excellency and inquire whether a visit would be necessary and useful." Further in the letter Bishop Matulaitis states: "I cannot make any judgment about Kaunas, but the presence of Msgr. Ratti in Vilnius was subject to conjecture and created much uneasiness."

The next meeting took place on the occasion of Msgr. Ratti's consecration as Archbishop in the Cathedral of Warsaw on October 28, 1919. The consecrating prelate was Archbishop Kakowski. Bishop Matulaitis was among the 21 bishops who attended the ceremonies. Other meetings occurred in January and March of 1920 when Archbishop Ratti stopped in Vilnius enroute to Kaunas and Riga.

On the few occasions when Bishop Matulaitis was in Warsaw, he visited the Papal Nuncio, who had been his guest twice in Vilnius in 1920. Apart from these personal visits, there was considerable correspondence between them. There are 18 letters to Bishop Matulaitis from August 11, 1919 to June 2, 1921, but only six copies of the Bishop's letters to the Nuncio are still extant. These refer to the business of the diocese and contain detailed answers to the Nuncio's queries. All this correspondence was confidential and was delivered by couriers and not through the mails.

Along with the letters, Bishop Matulaitis sent Polish newspaper clippings to show the extent and the viciousness of the attacks and slanders against him. The Nuncio was always quick in responding and encouraged him to bear up under these sufferings even as Christ suffered so much on

this earth. The warmth of his friendship is shown by the fact that the Nuncio always sent personal greetings on holidays and the onomastic feast day.

Pope Benedict XV was very pleased by the energy and success of Archbishop Ratti's work in Poland and the Baltic countries of Lithuania and Latvia, and on June 13, 1921 appointed him Cardinal Archbishop of Milan. Soon after, on January 22, 1922, Pope Benedict died and his successor was Cardinal Ratti who chose the name Pius XI.

As soon as Bishop Matulaitis heard that Cardinal Ratti had been elevated to the Papacy he sent congratulations, heartfelt good wishes, and asked for the Apostolic Blessing.

In answer, the Pope sent him a personal letter:

> My Esteemed Brother: We received your kind letter expressing your respect and devotion to Us, just recently elevated to the Throne of Peter by the mysterious will of God. We do not say that it is a cheerful letter because neither the times nor the circumstances in which you live allow us to be light-hearted. However, We have often seen with what wisdom and impartiality you pursue your pastoral duties, seeking no popular acclaim, but only the glory of God and the salvation of souls.
>
> Keep on serving the People of God as you have until now. We are sure, because of the nobility and great charity with which you fulfill your duties as Bishop, that all will obey and respect you. We pray especially that God will speedily grant those nations true peace and that the lost sheep will return to the fold of Holy Mother Church. Only in this way can the welfare and blessings of true nations be attained. With this hope in mind, and as an assurance of heavenly grace together with my special affection for you, my Esteemed Brother, We grant you, your priests and the faithful Our Heartfelt Apostolic Blessing. Written by Our hand at St. Peter's in Rome, February 22, 1922 in the first year of Our Pontificate, Pius XI.

There was one insurmountable obstacle to the machinations of the Polish government to remove Bishop Matulaitis from Vilnius. It was the complete confidence that the Pope had in him and their close friendship.

What did these two men of the Church have in common? The answer to this needs no deep probing. It was

their identical bond of spirit and ideals. Both of them were the embodiment of vibrant Christian perfection in their love of God, Church, humanity, and justice.

* * *

One who lived with the Bishop for five years from 1920 to 1925 and knew him well was Father John Krisciukaitis (1866-1946). He gives a vivid account of Bishop Matulaitis in his memoirs. Although these were written in Rome years later (1943-1944), they are credible and authentic because Father Krisciukaitis was known for his phenomenal memory. He records his arrival in Vilnius:

> I went directly to the Bishop's house from the station and was received most warmly. On October 9, just two days after my arrival, the Polish army marched on Vilnius despite the Suwalki Treaty of October 7, 1920. The Lithuanian defenders were not able to resist and began to leave the city. My first impulse was to drop everything and return to Mariampole, but the Bishop restrained me.
>
> The Bishop and I watched from the third floor window as the Lithuanians retreated and exchanged gun-fire with the pursuing Poles. Then we went to the dining room window and watched to see what the Poles would do with the Lithuanian flag which flew on Gediminas Hill. We saw that they had difficulty in lowering the flag and a dare-devil civilian climbed the pole and unhooked it. The Polish flag which was raised was torn to shreds by the high winds in a few days. The Bishop watched calmly and showed no emotion. I did not know then how well he was able to maintain his composure.

Initially the Bishop was reserved, polite and pleasant, but made no attempts to include Father Krisciukaitis in his personal life and work. His main duty was to peruse the newspapers and report to the Bishop items of greater interest, especially matters that concerned the diocese. His second duty was to explore bookstores and buy books for the library at Mariampole. Worthwhile books could be found in the many second-hand bookshops in Vilnius because people were forced to exchange their books for

money to live on. The Bishop was interested in this phase of his work and asked to see each purchased book which he looked over carefully and fondled like a mother would a child. His only recommendation was that he look for rarer books of lasting worth.

One evening when the Chancery Office was closed just before Easter of 1921, the Bishop remembered that an important document had to be typed in a hurry. Father Krisciukaitis admitted that he could do it if he had a typewriter. The Bishop gently remonstrated that he should have made this skill known before, and the priest replied that he had not been asked, and that it was unbecoming to boast. A typewriter was hurriedly delivered from the Chancery Office and the typed document met with the Bishop's approval. The services of Father Krisciukaitis as a typist were utilized a few more times. Then the Bishop decided to buy his own typewriter and this was instrumental in establishing a personal and comfortable relationship.

The Bishop made Father Krisciukaitis bursar of the household to take care of living expenses, salaries, Mass stipends, and to supervise the domestic help. He began to share with Father Krisciukaitis the correspondence he received, and asked for comments and advice in answering even private letters. When the Bishop was absent for longer periods of time, Father Krisciukaitis read whatever came in the mail and classified it. What concerned the Chancery Office he had delivered there, and forwarded what was more important or urgent to the Bishop. The other correspondence he filed for the Bishop's return or answered himself and signed as the Bishop's secretary. On his return from official functions, meetings, or even social gatherings, the Bishop related the more important things that had transpired, what speeches he had made, and what he had learned.

Bishop Matulaitis ordinarily rose at five o'clock. When he had to compose some special communique or message, he rose an hour or two earlier because he felt that a mind refreshed with some sleep was more fertile, and there

would be no interruptions. He celebrated Mass in his chapel at six. As were all the other regular meals, breakfast was spartan: cafe au lait or tea, bread, butter, and Lithuanian cheese. Lunch was at 1:30, but frequently later because he received callers all morning and was sometimes delayed. Herring was served on meatless days; rarely fish. The evening meal was clabbered milk and potatoes and a glass of tea.

If some unexpected guest was invited to lunch, he shared the same fare. When it was known that there would be guests, the luncheon was more elaborate. Guests were offered wine or an alcoholic beverage, and when the guest accepted, the Bishop would join and fill his glass partly and leave even some of that. This was his practice even at formal dinners.

After lunch the Bishop and Father Krisciukaitis would take a walk to Gediminas Hill or the Bernardine park if the weather permitted. In inclement weather or when the streets were crowded they strolled on the terrace. The latter part of the afternoon was taken up with meetings or visiting priests; and the evenings with reading, writing, and prayer.

The Bishop was a prolific writer. He did not have his personal letters typewritten, except when he wanted a copy for his files. In this case they had to be re-written because the originals were scribbled on note paper and full of corrections, additions and figures. Father Krisciukaitis soon learned to decipher them and had no difficulty in transcribing their contents.

Latin texts were jealously the Bishop's domain. Father Krisciukaitis records the incident when a diocesan report to the Vatican had to include a report on the seminary. Neatly typed and composed in Latin, it was prepared by the Rector, Father Uszyllo. The edited seminary report given by the Bishop to his secretary contained many deletions and corrections in his handwriting. The secretary exclaimed in surprise, "Why did your Excellency change such a beautifully written report?" The Bishop replied, "Yes, it

was beautifully and grammatically written, but it isn't Latin, and I won't sign any document in that kind of Latin."

In his communiques, especially the more important ones, he was careful that they be well-composed. He thought out and composed much of them in his mind, down to the smallest details and used Father Krisciukaitis as a sounding board. At times the secretary admitted that he did not understand what he had heard. The Bishop told him that he found it beneficial to speak his thoughts orally before they were committed to writing. Any critique by Father Krisciukaitis was accepted kindly and the Bishop would gladly use the pertinent ones and explain why he did not accept others. Thus the Bishop did not chain himself to the imperative dictum, "quod scripsi, scripsi."

The Bishop was industrious by habit. He pored over documents and books far into the night and left himself little enough time for sleep. Occasionally he mentions this in his letters.

* * *

The apostolic spirit was a pre-eminent characteristic in Bishop Matulaitis' make-up. He did not wait for people to come to him, he went to them after the Gospel's example of the good shepherd. He hurried to protect, defend, and provide nourishment for his flock. He knew the power of the living word, therefore he considered parish visitations one of his most important duties. He often admitted that in performing this duty his body became weary, but it was refreshing to the soul.

From the very inception of his episcopacy he was anxious to start these visitations, but was prevented by the military operations throughout his diocese. When the southeastern part of the diocese quieted, he made his first visitation in the Bialystok-Grodno areas on November 19-24, 1919. The more extensive visitations began in the summer of 1920. These are described by some of the priests who accompanied him. Father Sobczyk writes:

I had the opportunity to meet with the Bishop in June of 1920 as he made his visit to Mielnik and the neighboring parishes along the Bug River. That part of the country had not seen a bishop since 1863. The populace considered his visit of the greatest significance. I never saw such sights in my entire life. People by the thousands, descendants of the old Uniates who themselves had frequently suffered because of their faith, crowded the churches, displayed banners and flags, formed guards of honor along both sides of the road; and all this to meet the Bishop. The Jews and their rabbi greeted him as did the Orthodox with their priest. It was then that I saw the heavy burden the Bishop carried in preaching, sometimes four or five times a day, in celebrating High Mass and confirming hundreds, even thousands. The problems and disputes of the parishioners had to be settled. And he did all this in the spirit of God's peace. He soothed religious and nationalistic antipathies by constantly encouraging the people to practice Christian charity and forgiveness.

The Rev. Valentine Urmanowicz of the Warsaw Theological Institute writes:

The visitation in the parishes of the Bielsk deanery lasted about a month and a half. I was with the Bishop during that very hot spell of the summer of 1920. His inexhaustible kindness to all was fascinating. Each and all, priests, associates, and the people were touched by it. His compassion and heroic patience never lagged throughout that series of public appearances, the many Masses, and the confirming of literally thousands of people.

His composure never left him during the ceremonies, even to the point of ignoring the perspiration that rolled down his face and the flies and other flying insects that sometimes landed on his forehead or cheeks. The example of priestly zeal was radiant as he joined the priests in hearing the confessions of the faithful until the lines of waiting penitents dwindled.

There were some uncomfortable moments during the visitations. Father Anthony Zalewski made this deposition:

I met Bishop Matulaitis during his visitation in Bialystok. He encountered some untoward reactions. On one occasion a voice from the crowd shouted out: 'We should erect a gallows for that lithomaniac, not a triumphal arch.' Another time at table, a priest's behavior toward the Bishop because of his nationality was not only impolite, but indecently insulting. The Bishop did not react to either of these incidents.

> He was always kind and gracious to his priests. I know of a few instances where priests deserved suspension, but because of the Bishop's fatherly kindliness and understanding in talking to them, this was avoided. It seemed to me that this kind of compassion and sympathy would endear him to all the priests.

Throughout his term of office, Bishop Matulaitis was particular in making parish visitations, but his health suffered for it. After every few weeks he always became quite sick. The initial period of the visitations is reported in a long letter of November 1, 1921 to the Papal Nuncio Lauri:

> In 1919, I was able to make my visitations only in the Brest deanery at Kobrin, Bialystok (where I confirmed more than 6,000), and Grodno. In 1920, just before the bolshevik invasion, I had time to visit the deaneries of Bielsk, Bransk and Drohiczyn. This year throughout all of June and a part of July, I confirmed about 35,000 people in Vysniavas and Lyda. From August 4 to September 20, I made visitations in the deaneries of Bialystok and Knysinas. In these areas of the diocese there had not been a visitation for all of 23 years.
>
> The people met their bishop with joy, respect, and devotion, and as I left they showed their affection and gratitude. Practically on each day I celebrated a Pontifical High Mass, conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation, and preached at least once, but more often three or four times a day. I stayed in some parishes two ar three days, and in some only one. I myself noticed and the priests agreed that these pastoral visitations supplied needed spiritual renewal as if at parish missions. Although the work is hard, thank God, the results are most rewarding. The strain of the work exhausted my assistants, and I myself barely held out to the end.

Bishop Matulaitis left on June 20, 1922 for a Bishops Conference in Czestochowa, and returned on July 1. After taking care of current routine matters, he left on August 3 for a part of the diocese that had not seen a bishop for 60 years. The work-load was immense. Along with the ceremonies and sermons, there were confessions, and 35,000 of the faithful, including the elderly, adults, young people, and children, were confirmed. Tired to the point of exhaustion, he returned on August 28 and immediately

took to bed. He developed a serious case of pneumonia. The illness lasted four months.

There were no visitations in 1923 because he had to prepare a complete set of diocesan reports for his Ad Limina visit to Rome. In addition, there was much work in re-writing the constitution in time for the Marian General Chapter in Danzig. In one letter he even commented that his head is "full of paragraphs."

On June 7, 1924 he went to meet the Nuncio Lauri, then visiting in Bialystok, Grodno, and Rozany Stok. On June 20 he made his episcopal visitation in the deanery of Asmena. This lasted until July 17 when he returned completely exhausted and was ordered by his doctor to leave immediately for a health resort either in Kitzingen or Ciechocinek. Because of the difficulties in obtaining a foreign visa, he went to Ciechocinek and stayed until the beginning of September.

The Bishop also made visitations to all the parishes of the city of Vilnius, but at irregular intervals and not in the summer. The people loved their bishop so much that when he appeared in one parish, they came from other parishes to see and hear him.

It must be said that the Polish chauvinist agitations against Bishop Matulaitis did not affect the common people of Vilnius to any great extent. The greater part of them did not read the Polish newspapers. The local officials and the landowners had to take heed of the popular acclaim given to this good man.

Later, when the drive to remove the Bishop became open warfare in the newspapers and public meetings, the Polish authorities were afraid to use force for fear of world opinion and possible riots by the people. It was remembered vere well how the common people had rallied to protect the Bishop and his residence when the bolsheviks had made overtures to dispossess him.

* * *

December 8, 1919 was the first anniversary of Bishop Matulaitis' accession to the bishopric of the Vilnius diocese. He called that year one of "continual suffering and a Way of the Cross." But there was more of the same in the future: successive occupations of the city and the struggle for power became more intense.

As the Germans withdrew from their invaded eastern territories, other foreign powers sought to replace. These were the Russian bolsheviks and the Poles who had just so recently regained their own freedom. Without completing its own internal reorganization, Poland started a push toward the Ukraine, White Russia, Vilnius and the southern sections of Sudava-Suvalkai. Without much resistance, the Poles took Kiev in the Ukraine on May 8, 1920.

Of course, Soviet Russia could not tolerate this. It gathered the superior forces of the Red Army and chased the Poles all the way back to Warsaw.

The Supreme Allied Command became worried that this might cause another outbreak of war. It proposed that Russia declare an armistice and sent the famous French strategist, General Maxime Weygand (1867-1965), to Poland to pull together the beaten and disorganized army. Russia ignored the proposal for a truce because it did not belong to the League of Nations and was already negotiating a peace with Lithuania.

The Supreme Command took drastic steps to prevent any further incursions by Poland by forcing it to sign a special Protocol at Spa in Belgium on July 10, 1920, by which it was to draw back beyond the Curzon Line, established July 8, 1919, and return the region of Vilnius to Lithuania.

Practically at the same time on July 12, 1920 a peace treaty was signed in Moscow between the Soviet Union and Lithuania by which the region of Vilnius was ceded to Lithuania. At the end of August the seat of the Lithuanian government was transferred from Kaunas to its old Capital, Vilnius.

When the Polish forces withdrew from Vilnius, the Bishop's detractors and the politically involved Polish clergy left with them. Many of the parishes were left without priests and the Bishop had great difficulty replacing them. Since the Lithuanian and White Russian priests had remained in their assignments, he transferred a number of them to the vacated parishes. This emergency move was later used by Polish agitators as grounds to accuse the Bishop of seeding the Polish parishes with Lithuanians and White Russians.

With the Lithuanians governing Vilnius, the Bishop expected some normalcy in his life because the trouble-makers, calumniators, and political extremists were gone. His first worry as Superior General of the Marians was his Congregation. Granted the opportunity, he went to Mariampole in September of 1920. He stayed at the monastery about a week, conferred about the more pressing matters and received the vows of a few new members.

Although Lithuania had declared its neutrality in the Polish-Bolshevik conflict and looked only to defend the borders set by the Moscow treaty, the Poles ignored this. As the Poles drove the bolsheviks away from Warsaw they began to attack the Lithuanian garrisons in the Grodno-Augustow area to prevent a merger of the Lithuanian troops.

Lithuania asked the League of Nations to halt further acts of war on the part of the Poles. In their own defense, the Poles charged that Lithuania had violated its neutrality and thus had hampered Poland's campaign against the bolsheviks.

After a session of the League of Nations, its president, Leon Bourgeois (1851-1925), demanded by telegram on September 25 that Poland immediately cease all hostilities. On the following day Poland offered to negotiate directly with Lithuania at Suvalkai. These sessions began on September 29 and ended October 7. Without settling the question of borders, it was agreed that all military action

cease on both sides and that there be an exchange of prisoners of war.

But the hostilities did not cease. The Poles thrust into the positions they had previously foreseen on the principle of fait accompli. As the Suvalkai agreement was being signed, even then a strong contingent of Polish forces, two or three divisions, were advancing from Lyda on Vilnius which they seized on October 9.

The Polish army was led by General Lucjan Zeligowski (1856-1946). He was under Pilsudski's orders, but it was widely proclaimed that he initiated on his own the action to liberate Vilnius. There were only three battalions of Lithuanian soldiers in the city. For that reason they avoided a pitched battle. The agencies of the Lithuanian government, just recently transferred from Kaunas, hurriedly left the city. Pillage and pogroms began immediately and indiscriminate arrests followed soon after.

As soon as Vilnius was taken, Zeligowski's army started the second phase of its stratagem, to take Kaunas. The army rolled northward toward Ukmerge, but soon met the greater contingent of the Lithuanian army that was driving the bolsheviks out of Lithuania. The decisive Polish-Lithuanian battles took place November 17-21 in the vicinity of Sirvintai and Giedraiciai, where the Polish forces were overwhelmed and forced to retreat. What might have been the long-range results of these battles is unknown. Precisely at that moment the military control commission of the League of Nations intervened, demanded a cessation of hostilities and left the solution to diplomats and a plebiscite.

The occupation of Vilnius was not the only objective of Polish aggression. The complete plan was to polonize to the extent that there would be no trace of a Lithuanian element. This was so important to the Poles that just after three days, on October 12, they suppressed all Lithuanian newspapers, and after two more days imposed a strict censorship on all publications.

The next step was more touchy. This was to incite the

unlettered and deeply religious masses against the Lithuanians in the Vilnius area. For this they purposed to utilize the clergy. Civilian agitators served only to create riots, and not always successfully. The higher the clergy in the echelons of Church authority, the better would these serve their aims. So Bishop Matulaitis clearly was not their man because he was loved and revered by the masses who had experienced his all-encompassing compassion.

On this the Polish politicians who ultimately aimed at absorbing all of Lithuania agreed. They invited the Military Ordinary of the Polish army, suffragan bishop of Lvov Ladislaus Bandurski, a partisan of Pilsudski, to establish his office in Vilnius. Once settled there, Bandurski supported Pilsudski's federalist ideas.

The National Democrats on their part invited Archbishop Karol Hryniewiecki (1841-1929) to Vilnius. He had been bishop of Vilnius for not quite two years, 1883-1885. The Russian government had exiled him to Jaroslav and allowed him to go abroad only in 1890. He then settled in Lvov and was made titular Archbishop in 1891.

Bishop Matulaitis invited all the priests of the city to his residence to honor the distinguished guest who, after 34 years of exile, had come to visit his former bishopric. The reception was formal. After the preliminary speeches of welcome the eighty-year old Archbishop rose to speak.

He expressed his pleasure to be there and began a long story of the cruel persecutions by the Czar's police and the Russian Orthodox during his tenure in Vilnius, and of his defense of the Catholic Church and the Polish cause. At that time, he said, everyone worked hand-in-hand with the bishop and the priests. There was no nationality problem. All felt that they were Catholics and Poles.

He spoke with a depth of feeling. Then he turned to Bishop Matulaitis and, with what he termed "heart-break," upbraided him for fomenting nationalistic movements without heed to the consequences, contentions, bitterness between the people and the clergy, slander and demoralization in the House of God.

These harsh words, according to Father Stanislaus Mozejko, "froze everyone's blood." Bishop Matulaitis flushed but retained heroic self-control in not making a rebuttal. The conclusion of this incident is reported by another witness, Father Ladislaus Kurp-Garbowskis:

> When Archbishop Hryniewiecki finished speaking, Bishop Matulaitis said with true and sincere respect, 'And now let us kneel and ask His Excellency for his blessing,' and he himself knelt down with his priests.

Chapter 10

Politics and The Church

At the urging of Father Krisciukaitis, Bishop Matulaitis resumed his diary on February 19, 1921. He was reminded that a number of significant events which affected the Church and his relations with the Polish authorities had been unrecorded. The resumed journal covered only a short period of time until April 2, 1921. The conversations and events he recorded show that it was a critical time.

The President of the Provisional Governing Commission in Vilnius, Vytautas Abramavicius, was replaced by General Stephen Mokrzecki. General Zeligowski found that Abramavicius, a rather inefficient official, did not meet his expectations, and he chose the more loyal and energetic general for the post. On February 19, General Mokrzecki invited Bishop Matulaitis and Archbishop Hryniewiecki to a meeting, ostensibly to select an executive committee to be in charge of raising funds.

After the meeting, the two bishops were asked to remain for further discussions. It was then that Bishop Matulaitis found out why he had been invited. The general began to accuse the priests of Vilnius of being involved too much in politics. He asked that they be restrained. He made it plain that if the Bishop did nothing about this, he as head of government would be forced to take drastic steps, and he would prefer not to. Archbishop Hryniewiecki sided with the general. Bishop Matulaitis knew that this was aimed at the Lithuanian and White Russian priests; whereas it was

the Polish clergy of the Democrat Nationalists who rightly deserved the accusation. He calmly replied:

> I, too, am strictly opposed to the involvement of priests in politics. I have even issued a Pastoral Letter to the priests, calling their attention to the mandate of Pope Benedict XV that priests restrict themselves to purely religious themes in their sermons and avoid nationalistic or political pronouncements. I warned them against joining political factions. I stressed that their first duty is to fulfill their pastoral obligations, of which there are more than enough, and then to concern themselves with educational and social problems. But it seems they were not to be persuaded. Each one thinks that his voice is of utmost importance in settling the fate of the nation, and for that reason, one after another meddles in politics, gets fired up, thrashes around and loses perspective. This is the malady of the times, and I don't know how to remedy the situation. People become incorrigible. Perhaps we will have to wait until it all blows over.

Here the General, and especially the Archbishop, began a tirade against Lithuanian and White Russian priests. The Bishop interrupted:

> These priests are not the only guilty ones; the Polish priests are not blameless... You have been in church for important patriotic observances and you have heard Polish priests give sermons. Can you say that they refrained from nationalistic politicking in their sermons?

The General was silent. Then the Bishop alluded to Bishop Bandurski's sermon on the occasion of the "January Uprising." He said not one word about God. He began with Poland, expanded on and ended with Poland. His thematic development contained not one word from Scripture, only citations from Polish poets. Such sermons were not unique, especially at public celebrations. There were many such given by priests and especially by army chaplains.

> It is necessary that all priests, Polish, Lithuanian, and White Russian, be equally restrained. The Polish Government insists that I exempt the Poles, so I have no choice but to give equal freedom to all. Otherwise I would be unjust. I cannot ally the Church to any one political party or philosophy.

Then the two Polish protagonists were particularly critical of the pastor of Borunai, a White Russian priest, Father Petrovski, for supporting an organization of peasants, called Rebirth, which was against landowners. They charged that he attended a recent meeting, and that he was also active in encouraging White Russians to establish their own schools. In fact, they said, he was working to establish a White Russian Teachers College, and for what purpose? In this, he was opposing the Polish government and was harming the Church. They claimed that the people were dissatisfied and had complained. Then the general politely urged that he be removed and transferred to Kobrun or elsewhere, where he would have no opportunity to be active. After the general finished, the Bishop replied:

> General, your predecessor, Mr. Abramavicius, on a visit to me, requested that I remove Father Olszanski from Vilnius for his activities among the working classes. At that time I asked Mr. Abramavicius to give me documentary evidence of improper political activity, and I would turn it over to the diocesan tribunal. If he was found guilty of any infraction of Canon Law, I would punish him. Now I make the same request of you. I have not punished or silenced anyone for political or nationalistic views as long as they were not contrary to Christian doctrine, nor will I do so now. I hold to the principle that one does not imperil one's eternal salvation by holding federalist or annexionist views, or if one upholds Lithuanian independence or is in favor of uniting with Poland. I respect the right to do this. Thus far, I cannot see that Father Petrovski is an enemy of Poland. In fact, when he was at the head of the Workers League of St. Casimir, he helped the Polish Legionaries in their first attempt to recapture Vilnius from the bolsheviks. He even received a commendation from the Polish authorities for this which was published in the newspapers. Father Petrovski even made trips to Warsaw to confer with the Polish Christian Democrats and espoused their philosophy. Even in Borunai he had established several Polish schools.

Archbishop Hryniewiecki interrupted:

> At that time he acted as a good Catholic, but now he has strayed and should be punished and removed. He is involved with the Rebirth and is against the landowners.

Bishop Matulaitis countered with:

> And who heads and supports the Rebirth? Is it not Pilsudski and the Polish government who subsidize and lead this organization to counteract the Polish Democrat Nationalists? I see that this is government business and I refuse to become involved.

When the Archbishop insisted that the Rebirth is opposed to Catholicism, the Bishop replied:

> The members of that organization came to me and I told them that as long as they did nothing to harm the Church and religion, I would have nothing to say to them. They avowed that, far from opposing Catholicism, they upheld religion. The truth of the matter is that I have not heard of any instance where they were anti-Catholic. But they did say that, if for political reasons priests would attack or hamper their work, they would oppose such priests out of self-defense. This would be political warfare. They even asked me to assign them a priest leader. I refused because theirs was a political organization. Priests should not be involved in such. As yet, I have no reason to condemn this group.
>
> Furthermore, religion as such is not the main worry of the Rebirth or of the Nationalist Democrats. They are concerned chiefly with politics. The one organization is for federation and the other is for annexation, and this is an ideological conflict. But I can see that both of them would like to have ecclesiastical support for their purposes and thus manipulate the clergy. The Nationalists claim the patronage of Archbishop Hryniewiecki and some priests. The Rebirth group claims Bishop Bandurski, Father Petrovski and others as their patrons. As long as I cannot dictate their leanings, I leave them a free hand. But I cannot agree to either faction claiming a monopoly on the Church or religion.
>
> Here you demand that I punish the priests who favor the Rebirth, the federalists, and this organization demands in writing that I restrain the priests from attacking and calumniating them even from the pulpits. At this time I can only see this as a political conflict, and I have no intention of being involved.

Archbishop Hryniewiecki then accused Father Petrovski of politicking just the past Sunday in a public meeting and agitating the people against the landowners. Bishop Matulaitis said:

> I have not heard that his speeches or sermons contain anything contrary to the faith, but there are many priests in

Vilnius, e.g. Father Lutoslawski, who are reported as ignoring the Gospels and giving nothing but political speeches in church. I could not prevent this, so I must grant the same freedom to Father Petrovski. Moreover, Your Excellency, let us take your interview with a news correspondent as printed in two papers. Was that not political from beginning to end? So how can I forbid other priests to express their political views?

Archbishop Hryniewiecki became angry and began a harangue against Lithuanians and White Russians. He accused Bishop Matulaitis of introducing White Russian into church services thereby harming the Church and encouraging Orthodoxy. He said that previously there had been no problems about church language, that the present state of affairs was the work of enemies of the Church and Poland, and that it was entirely unnecessary, etc. The Bishop replied:

You view these nations you rail against, Reverend Archbishop, as they were forty years ago, and see them with the eyes of a man who hasn't been here for forty years. Today's Lithuanians and White Russians are not the same. They have come alive, they are alert to their potential, they demand their rights and are seeking them. It will come to pass that we will do nothing to halt the inevitable march of time and history. Furthermore, on the question of language in the churches, I have made no changes. In these turbulent times I only maintain the order left me by my predecessors from before the war. I have issued an official decree, that without my specific permission no one is to make any changes as to the use of language in religious services.

White Russian was introduced by Bishop Ropp in the Disna deanery, and Bishop Lozinski did the same in the diocese of Minsk. Both are Poles. My only request is that at least priests give religious instructions to the children in the language they best understand. In this case it happens to be White Russian. Where sermons are preached in White Russian, I have not heard that they were detrimental to the faith. On the contrary, many White Russian Orthodox attend these services deliberately because of the language, become more tolerant to Catholicism, and some become converted. In the prevailing political situation, now is not the time to settle these matters with any finality.

In the matter of the White Russian schools, I give no permissions nor do I support them financially. This is a matter for

> the civilian authorities. I understand that Father Petrovski is establishing a Teachers College for White Russians with the permission of former government officials Mr. Abramavicius, and Mr. Ivanauskas, a White Russian. It seems that the College was not seen as any threat to the political aims of that government. I cannot understand why I am being implicated now.

The General responded that the people are complaining about this priest's activities. The Bishop replied:

> I want you or the people to prove to me that Father Petrovski has violated Canon Law, and I will take measures to punish him. Thus far I have not heard any complaints from the Borunai parish. On the contrary, I hear that the people love and respect him. If I were to remove this priest, not only the parish but the whole vicinity would rise to defend him. And if the people are not pleased with a White Russian school, they will not send their children there, and the matter will be finished.

General Mokrzecki tried to show that Borunai was a center of Polish culture, developed through the many years by the Poles, and should remain such. To which the Bishop replied:

> I will not get involved in that. Please tell me what language the common people of Borunai speak. Is it not White Russian? So what harm is it for a White Russian priest to work there? It seems to me only proper that he work among his own.

* * *

The dean of the Asmena vicariate, Father Gorski, had been reported many times by his priests for his heavy-handed treatment and for siding with the Polish authorities even to the point of informing on priests. After many requests that he be removed as dean, the Bishop tried to soothe the priests and reconcile them with Father Gorski, but without success.

When the bolsheviks were approching Asmena, Father Gorski fled to Warsaw and the Bishop appointed Father Michael Abaravicius as pastor and dean. The priests of the vicariate were pleased with the appointment, but when

Father Gorski returned from Warsaw, he demanded that he be restored to his former positions. The Bishop agreed that he again be pastor of Asmena and transferred Father Abaravicius. Father Gorski was not satisfied and appealed to some prominent Polish army officers to intercede with General Zeligowski to have Gorski re-appointed as dean, on the grounds that his influence was needed to maintain the Polish ascendancy in the Asmena deanery. He charged that the Bishop had purposely chosen a Lithuanian for dean to diminish Polish influence.

Apart from this, Father Gorski had people send petitions to General Zeligowski and the Bishop to further his cause. The petitions bore about fifty signatures of questionable authenticity. The Bishop knew well that Father Gorski was disliked and distrusted not only by the priests but by the people as well.

As the same meeting mentioned above continued, General Mokrzecki stated that the people demanded Father Gorski's reinstatement as dean of Asmena. Bishop Matulaitis replied:

> I don't know why the people have to worry about the assigning of deans. This is a matter of my own jurisdiction and only concerns the priests. Deans are the bishop's representatives to priests for ecclesiastical affairs. Now if the people are getting involved, it must be due to somebody's misguided agitation.

The General then made an issue of the fact that Father Abaravicius was of Lithuanian orientation. The Bishop replied to this:

> I pay no attention to a priest's political or national orientation. I sent Father Abaravicius to Asmena not for political reasons, but only to care for the spiritual welfare of the people; and I know definitely that he was not involved in politicking. I had no complaints from the people. Besides, he is now in a White Russian parish.

Finally, the General charged that the Bishop was involving himself in politics. The astounded Bishop asked for particulars.

The General: Well, a White Russian newspaper reported that you attended a high school program commemorating the February 16 Lithuanian Declaration of Independence. When the speaker, Father Stankevicius, said that Vilnius should remain Lithuanian, you applauded his speech.

The Bishop: Very well, and when I attended your celebration of the Lithuanian-White Russian division's festivities, when I attended all the national Polish celebrations, when I attended with you the recent patriotic program given by the Polish students in the City Auditorium, you and I applauded. Was all this wrong on my part? I consider the Poles, White Russians and Lithuanians to be my spiritual children given to my pastoral care, equal in my eyes in every respect, and it behooves me to serve them all without showing preference, and to rejoice and grieve with them all. Tell me, what would the Lithuanians have said if, after my participation in these Polish celebrations, I would have refused their invitation and not attended their celebration? My duty is to serve all equally.

Bishop Bandurski sided with Bishop Matulaitis as these unpleasant conversations wound down. Before leaving, the Archbishop complained that the newspapers had been bitterly critical of him. He turned to Bishop Matulaitis and said, "**Your** newspapers dare to speak so badly about an old man!"

Quite calmly the Bishop replied: "I have no newspapers and do not control any. We have only the newspapers the General permits us to have." This ended the conversation. When the Archbishop and Bishop Bandurski left, the Bishop asked for a private word with the General and told him very seriously:

Please tell me, sir, about the Archbishop's presence here in Vilnius, and all the interviews with him printed in the press, and all his activities generally speaking. Are these not political matters and political actions? If an archbishop politicizes, how can I forbid my priests to do the same, even to defending themselves at times? I try only to pacify, appease, and soothe as best I can. If I would not do that, the situation could be much more difficult and could possibly get out of hand. I use these same methods with the same intentions with White Russians, Lithuanians, and Poles, that all may eventually become reconciled and live in harmony, peace, and charity. But please do not expect me to tie the Church into any one party, and don't expect me to condemn among the Lithuanians

> and the White Russians what you praise and accept among the Polish priests. Let us put this matter in the proper perspective. If the priests offend against your laws and directives in political matters, this is your province to examine and process. You have the right and the means to do that. When it becomes clear that a priest offends against the laws of the Church, that is my province and I will take the necessary steps.

After completing this almost reportorial account in his journal, the Bishop adds that it was evident that the General was goaded into this confrontation by Archbishop Hryniewiecki. This was later affirmed by Bishop Bandurski.

* * *

This was the first confrontation between the two highest authorities in Vilnius, the Bishop and the head of "Middle Lithuania." Both laid out their aims and their programs. The military, ordinarily, has little use for philosophy and logic. It only respects power emanating through the chain of command. Whatever stands in its way has to be eliminated. Bishop Matulaitis was determined to remain a truly Catholic bishop and was adamant that the Church not be used for the purposes of polonizing. The Poles had failed to win his cooperation and decided that Vilnius was not the place for such a bishop. He must leave Vilnius. If he does not withdraw willingly, he must be forced out.

The question arose about how to bring this about. To request that the Pope remove him would require compelling reasons. To point out that the real reason was his intransigence to polonization appeared futile. Several complaints about the Bishop were made through Poland's emissary to the Vatican, but these were of no avail. The Vatican immediately made Bishop Matulaitis aware of the charges and he had no difficulty in proving their baseness and falsity. In one of his communications to the Holy See, he added: "How dare they present such nonsense officially to the Holy Father! It is an insult to him."

To force the Bishop from Vilnius, the Poles started a concentrated smear campaign in the press and public meetings. The main thrust of the propaganda was pernicious. The Bishop is a Lithuanian! He was appointed here by Germans and Lithuanians. He carries on Lithuanian politics. He is an agent of Kaunas in Lithuania. He despises Poland and everything Polish, etc.... The Poles were absolutely unethical in their methods. They spread all kinds of rumors, fabrications, outright lies and contumely. The newspapers published by the Nationalist Democrats were especially vicious.

The Polish government tried to maintain an official espect for the Bishop, though it openly suspected that he was an enemy of Poland. This was demonstrated by continual surveillance, raids, and searches for caches of hidden weapons. Many of the Polish clergy participated in the smear campaign. They used pseudonyms in making insinuations against the Bishop in articles they wrote for the newspapers.

This propaganda had effect not just in Vilnius, but also throughout all of Poland, because the Poles, the clergy not excepted, were convinced that the good of the nation required all border lands to be polonized. Every opponent of this aim was an enemy of the state. Therefore, it was no wonder that no one defended the Bishop.

It is not difficult to imagine the pressures this Polish attitude placed on the Bishop. This was his continual cross. To live among such people, to have daily dealings with them, to converse with them, knowing well their antagonisms, was most difficult. He had to be careful of every word and action. It was here that the Bishop's exceptional patience, strong will, and, according to Father Maciejewicz, his "exceedingly well-developed character" was manifest. His demeanor always showed an emotional balance. He was always calm and pleasant, even in unfriendly confrontations. He lived out his often quoted phrase from St. Paul: "Vince in bono malum," conquer evil with good. Although

he was constantly distressed, he never complained to others, but rather sought solace in prayer.

And yet, Father Krisciukaitis mentions in his own memoirs that an occasional complaint slipped out. "One day after we got up from lunch, the conversation lagged. Suddenly the Bishop stopped and gazed out the window for a bit and said in a half-whisper, 'Vilnius is God's punishment for my sins.' Then he immediately changed the subject."

At the height of the smear campaign, there was strong cause to fear that an attempt might be made on the Bishop's life. Friendly people urged the Bishop to be on his guard as they had heard there were plans for his assassination. The Bishop thought this was not beyond the realm of possibility. Even without a conspiracy, some hot-headed "patriot" might try to become a national hero by executing a dangerous enemy. Despite this, the Bishop took no unusual precautions. He remained available to any and all callers without any special screening. He went about on foot in the city whenever necessary, and often repeated that he was prepared to die, if that was God's will.

The Bishop did not take any retaliatory steps against the priests who campaigned against him, feeling that such a reaction would intensify rather than diminish the public outcry. He followed the Polish press closely. When the attacks were merely against his person, he did not react. But when the Church or the Bishop's authority was impugned he knew how to respond strongly.

An adversary attitude toward the Bishop prevailed even among his closer co-workers, the Staff of the Chancery Office. The upheaval caused by the war and the flight of the priests created difficulty in assembling a full staff of competent people for the Chancery. Even though some replacements were clearly indicated, the shortage of priests made it necessary to bear with the situation. There were some in the Office who were clearly opposed to the Bishop and thought he did not know. Others waited to be removed thereby to become martyrs for the Polish cause.

The Vice-Chancellor, Father Julian Steckiewicz, did practically no work and used his time for politicking for the Democrat Nationalists. When the first occupation by the bolsheviks took place in 1919, he fled to Poland and stayed there for two months. In June of 1920 he again went to Poland and returned to Vilnius only after nine months.

When he returned, he did not approach the Bishop in person, but merely sent a letter asking to be released from his duties. He gave as his reason the latest transfer of priests and claimed that this convinced him that the Bishop favors Lithuanian and White Russian priests and carries on a "party line." He alleged that after consulting with his confessor he decided to resign rather than cooperate in the work which is harmful to his homeland Poland and to the Church. His letter contained no specific facts. Bishop Matulaitis writes about him:

> Thank God that he asked for a release. I always felt that I had enemies in the Chancery Office, that it was he who divulged sensitive Office matters to his own kind, thereby hampering my work. I had received complaints that letters against some priests never reached me because he suppressed them and claimed that they were somehow lost... Several times I had asked him to publish my directives in the 'Vilnius Daily,' and he had failed to do so. It was quite evident that he and some of the other priests of the Nationalists were working against me. I bore all this patiently because of the unrest of the times and the abnormal conditions in the region.
>
> I let Father Steckiewicz go as he requested. Now he goes about the city claiming that he had given me a letter of resignation and boasting about his heroic gesture. May God protect and bless him.

The Chancellor, Canon Lucian Chalecki (1873-1964), was born of a noble family in Minsk. He was most efficient and thorough in his duties. His relationship with the Bishop was good and sincerely cordial. Sometimes the Chancellor complained that he himself was being denounced by the Nationalists. How could he, a Pole and a nobleman, serve a Lithuanian bishop so faithfully, they charged. To this he retorted that he, as a priest, must be faithful to his bishop. The bishop's nationality did not

Chancellor Lucian Chalecki and Bishop George

concern him. Even if he were a Chinaman, he would still serve him faithfully. Besides, his service to Bishop Matulaitis did not make him any less a good patriotic Pole.

The Chancellor was used by the Democratic Nationalists for a dramatic episode. One day, while the Bishop was at lunch, the Chancellor hurried over, apologized for interrupting, and told the Bishop that a Superior Magistrate of the district court was waiting at the Chancery Office. This official had told the Chancellor that Father Karol Gumbaragis had been arrested and jailed on capital charges and that he might face a firing-squad. However, if the Bishop were to transfer him, the charges would be dropped.

Recognizing this for the ploy it was, the Bishop replied sternly: "Please tell the gentleman that if Father Gumbaragis' crime is so great that it deserves execution, so let it be. But I will not transfer him." The shaken Chancellor tried to explain that the transfer of a priest is such an easy and routine matter that it was not worth putting a human life in jeopardy for it. The Bishop replied tartly: "If today I submit to that kind of demand, then tomorrow at least ten priests will be arrested." The Chancellor gave this message to the magistrate. Two days later the released Father Gumbaragis came to the Bishop and told him the whole

story of his arrest. He had not been charged at all and had returned to his parish unhindered.

* * *

On the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1921, the Bishop celebrated Mass at nine o'clock in the chapel of the Magdalene Sisters and gave a short sermon. After breakfast he visited the Girls Trade School conducted by the nuns. From there he left for Lukiskiai square where a Solemn High Mass was celebrated on the occasion of Pilsudski's patronal feast day. The celebrant was Bishop Bandurski, but there was no sermon. The Bishop participated in the Mass and the civil ceremonies as a guest of General Mokrzecki.

A convocation was held at the University to honor General Pilsudski. The first speaker was the Rector, Michael Siedlecki, whose theme was the importance of these times for Poland: the peace treaty with the bolsheviks, the plebiscite in Silesia, the negotiations with Lithuania. He expressed confidence that all this would be of eventual benefit to Poland. He praised Pilsudski and spoke glowingly of General Zeligowski. The next speaker, Prof. Ladislaus Zawadzki, touched on the past and future of Silesia and its Germanization. The Vice-Rector, Bronislaus Zongollowicz, a former official of the Kaunas Chancery, apotheosized Poland and Polish patriotism in poetic form.

The Control Commision of the League of Nations was represented by Spain's Major Uzquiano. In his speech the Rector had upbraided the League of Nations, and if the representative could have understood the language he would have been insulted. The Major was a long-time acquaintance of Bishop Matulaitis, a charming person and a good Catholic. He knew French, English, German, and Russian. He was also aware of the local situation. He promised to deliver on the following day Archbishop Ratti's letter which he had brought from Warsaw for Bishop Matulaitis.

The next day (March 20) was Palm Sunday. The Bishop celebrated Mass in the Cathedral. On leaving he saw a group of women urging other women to attend a protest meeting against Col. Chardigny, head of the Commission, for denying women the right to vote in the plebiscite.

During afternoon services in the Cathedral, the Bishop gave an inspiring sermon on the Passion of Christ, and the people were pleased to hear a completely religious sermon without any allusions to political or nationalistic affairs. It was an opportunity for them to reflect on the word of God, to consider in the depth of their souls their own eternal salvation.

As he had promised, the Major called on the Bishop Monday evening and delivered Archbishop Ratti's letter. Their conversation lasted more than an hour. Major Uzquiano described his meeting with the Nuncio in Warsaw where they had spoken about Bishop Matulaitis and the general situation in the Vilnius diocese. Among other things, he told the Bishop that a certain Alexander Meysztowicz had asked him to use the influence of the Spanish Embassy in the Vatican to have Bishop Matulaitis removed from Vilnius. When the Major refused to be involved, this landowner went in person to the Nuncio in Warsaw where again he gained nothing and then said that he would appeal directly to Rome. The Bishop happily broke in: "Now there indeed is my friend! He is working hard for my benefit. I did not want to go to Vilnius, and I tried hard to avoid it. I went to Vilnius strictly out of obedience to the Pope. I shall be happy to leave as soon as the Pope gives the word." The Major hurried to add, "I know that is how it was. Archbishop Ratti told me all about it."

* * *

The Bishop received a telegram the morning of March 22, 1921, that Monsignor Michalkevicius was returning. He

had left for Warsaw on April 29, 1919 to escape the bolshevik troops as they were marching on Vilnius, but had been captured by them. The Bishop gave orders that he be met at the station, but somehow or other he was missed.

As soon as the Bishop learned that he had arrived at the house, he went immediately to meet him. Msgr. Michalkevicius said that at the beginning he had lived with the bishop in Minsk, but later had been taken to a prison in Moscow. After some time he was given the freedom of the city. He did not complain that the bolsheviks had treated him badly, but prison and exile could not have been pleasant. During his time in Russia he was able to make contacts with the Lithuanian delegates from Kaunas, but despite their efforts he was not freed.

The Bishop was happy that he had returned in good health and felt fit enough to help him in governing the diocese, because of all the work and worries. It was Holy Week. The Bishop took care of the ceremonies for Holy Thursday, the Easter Vigil and the Solemn Mass on Easter Sunday. Then he made official visits to government officials according to protocol.

* * *

In preparing for the second phase of the occupation of the Vilnius territory, a congressional election for "Middle Lithuania" was planned instead of a plebiscite. This demanded a stronger leadership than that provided by General Mokrzecki. General Zeligowski appointed Alexander Meysztowicz (1864-1943) to be president of the Provisional Governing Commission on November 21, 1921. As governor of "Middle Lithuania," he was heard more than once to have said that what the Lithuanians and White Russians in the Vilnius territory needed was the "big stick," and then they would soon settle down, become silent, and disappear entirely...

The congressional elections took place on January 8, 1922. Lithuanians, White Russians, and Jews boycotted the

elections because they expected no benefit from them. This was injurious to the interests and ambitions of Polish politicians, and Meysztowicz started to wield the "big stick." From January 19 to 23, the police arrested 33 of the more prominent Lithuanians and White Russians. Father Krisciukaitis gives a running account of the arrests and indictments in his memoirs.

> That among the arrested were Canon Kukta and Mr. Birziska was no surprise, but that Andrew Meciunas, the Bishop's houseman was also arrested is not easy to understand. It turned out that he was arrested, jailed, and deported only because they wanted to put a stigma on the Bishop for having employed a traitor to Poland.
>
> I was not at home when they apprehended Andrew. Two policemen came and told Andrew that he was being arrested and would be jailed. They allowed him to say goodbye to the ailing Bishop and went along with him to the Bishop's room. They made no extensive search but merely gave the room a passing glance. That arrest was such a surprise to us that we thought there was some misunderstanding about his identity.
>
> One day at dusk the doorbell sounded. There was no houseman so I went to see who it was. A gentleman, unfamiliar to me, wanted to see the Bishop. I told him that the Bishop was sick and was not seeing anyone. The caller then identified himself as Prime Minister Meystowicz and said he had urgent official business. I invited him in and the Bishop agreed to see him in his bedroom. Their conversation lasted about forty minutes. When the visitor left, I hurried to find out from the Bishop what this important business was all about.
>
> Smiling broadly, the Bishop said that Meysztowicz was a very poor actor with no artistic ability at all. On entering he began to play the part of a most unhappy man, but did it so badly that it was laughable. He said that the arrest of Lithuanians and White Russians was causing him the greatest sorrow, but that he had been compelled to have them arrested because he was in possession of undeniable evidence of their guilt. Their crimes were found to be so serious that after a trial they unquestionably would be sentenced to death... 'This is my great misfortune and sorrow,' he continued, 'that I shall have to condemn so many to death and cause so much grief to their families. From this great calamity only the Bishop can save him and them.' 'How?' the Bishop asked. 'If the Bishop took complete responsibility for them,' he said, 'then they

would not be tried and would be released.' The Bishop told him that he would not accept this responsibility because he doubted the prisoners were guilty, and they parted.

The repercussions of this arrest and imprisonment of innocent people were felt widely. The Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister, Vladas Jurgutis, sent a telegram to the League of Nations, demanding the release of the prisoners. The League responded quickly by demanding that Warsaw release the Vilnius prisoners. The Poles tried to negotiate with the Lithuanian government by offering to exchange them for Polish prisoners of war, but the Lithuanians refused.

When Warsaw saw that the politics of the "big stick" had failed, Gabriel Narutavicius, the Minister of Public Works, was sent to coerce the officials in Vilnius to release all 33 of the prisoners and deport them to Lithuania.

On February 5 the prisoners were taken to the railroad station and transported in a two-car train to the neutral zone near Vievis. From there they were marched to the nearest village and turned over to the Lithuanian army as deportees. They reached Kaunas by train late that night. There were twenty Lithuanians and thirteen White Russians among the deportees.

Canon Kukta's deportation was very painful to Bishop Matulaitis, but he did not show it to anyone. Without long delay, on March 3, he appointed Canon Kukta as Administrator of that section of the Vilnius diocese within Lithuanian boundaries, and on that same day he made known the appointment to the Lithuanian government. About a year later, the Polish government inquired of the Bishop whether the traitor Canon Kukta had been made Administrator of the line of demarcation. The Bishop replied that no administrator is ever assigned to any line of demarcation, but that Canon Kukta had been appointed Administrator to that part of the diocese that was in Lithuania. The Bishop then added, if Canon Kukta had been sentenced for treason, then why wasn't he as bishop made aware of this until now.

When the Polish Parliament ratified the Constitution, Gabriel Narutavicius (1865-1922) was elected Poland's first President on December 9, 1922. His older brother Stanislaus (1862-1932) was one of the signatories of the Lithuanian Declaration of Independence. Five days after his election, President Narutavicius was assassinated while attending the opening of an art exhibit.

Stanislaus Wojciechowski was elected the new President on December 20, 1922. Shortly after his inauguration he prepared to visit Vilnius. Arrangements were made for a lavish reception and the program called for religious services in the Cathedral where the Bishop was to meet him at the portals and escort him to a place of honor, give a welcoming address, and pontificate at a Solemn High Mass.

On the eve of the ceremonies, Msgr. Michalkevicius came to the Bishop. In extreme agitation he paced the floor and kept muttering "straszne rzeczy" (it's terrible). The Bishop was alarmed and tried to calm him, but he kept pacing and muttering, 'it's terrible.' In a firm tone the Bishop told him to sit down and tell him what happened. The Monsignor perched nervously and told the Bishop that he had heard that the Nationalist Democrats were planning to keep him from the Cathedral the next morning, even to inflicting physical harm or even killing him on the way. Then Msgr. Michalkevicius begged the Bishop not to go and to delegate him to take care of all the ceremonies.

The Bishop told him firmly: "If the Nationalists are planning any such venture, let them; but I shall do my duty. Either I preside at the services, or there won't be any. I forbid anyone else to hold these services, 'sub poena suspensionis ipso facto,' and please relay this message to the entire Chapter." When Monsignor was asked where he had received this information, he refused to answer or give any other clarification. After a hurried goodbye, he left. Father Krisciukaitis and the Chancellor heard this conversation. They all decided that there would be no incident, and they were right. No one created any disturbance and the services in the Cathedral proceeded with great pomp.

* * *

The Polish police treated Bishop Matulaitis as though he were a foreign agent. He was subjected to constant surveillance and all his callers were subject to scrutiny. He knew that the secret police had established an observation post in a house directly across from his residence. From two windows every entrance and exit was easily seen, as well as any movement within the gates of the episcopal compound. It seems that the Polish government seriously suspected the Bishop of dealing in arms and that he had secret depots for weapons.

As an example of police diligence, on one occasion Mr. Dominic Blynas, a clerk in the Ministry of Finance, drove with proper permission to Vilnius from Kaunas in a small automobile to transact business pertinent to his duties. He called on the Bishop about four o'clock in the afternoon and said he was returning to Kaunas on the next day and would deliver any letters the Bishop might have to send. There was no direct communication between Vilnius and Kaunas at that time.

After he left, the Bishop wrote a few letters to the Marians and, at the time agreed, Father Krisciukaitis went to the Hotel Italia and asked that Mr. Blynas be paged. The desk-clerk smiled and said that the gentleman had departed yesterday after having been interrogated extensively in the hotel lobby about his visit with the Bishop.

On day at dusk in the autumn of 1922, a farm truck, its contents covered with white canvas, drove into the Bishop's courtyard. The driver went to the kitchen and asked where he could unload the heads of cabbage he had delivered. In a few minutes two men burst into the kitchen and accused the driver of delivering a load of bombs... The driver took it as a joke until the men demanded that the area be lighted. They forced him to unload every head of cabbage. When they found nothing suspicious, the men left. This was a load of produce from the vegetable gardens in Trinapolis, the Bishop's country villa.

* * *

Father Krisciukaitis had come to Vilnius on a Lithuanian internal passport. None other was required because Vilnius was then under Lithuanian control. Suspicion fell on him and there was some danger that he might be deprived of it and be deported. At the various Polish festivities where the Bishop had to make an appearance, it became a matter of discretion that Father Krisciukaitis should not accompany him. The Bishop chose members of the Chapter for his companions. Father Krisciukaitis limited his attendance only to Lithuanian affairs and to his duties as ordinary confessor for the Polish nuns.

In the line of his duties as secretary to the Bishop he often had to make more extensive trips, sometimes even to Warsaw. This became a touchy situation without proper Polish registry. The Bishop suggested that his secretary become a Polish citizen, but some of the conditions were impossible to satisfy. Luckily a solution was found when the civil government demanded that each of the Curia employees be provided with personal identification, containing a photograph and stating the position held. Father Krisciukaitis was listed as "The Bishop's Representative for Religious Affairs." This was an acceptable official document and he was able to travel freely throughout all Poland.

For Bishop Matulaitis matters were somewhat different. The local Polish authorities were especially interested in his citizenship and asked proof of it. The Bishop decided not to reply to any written correspondence on this matter and instructed the Curia not to answer any queries about his citizenship. This tactic of silent neglect succeeded until they got the opportunity for retaliation.

The Bishop received an invitation to take part in the consecration of Bishop Jezups Rancans in Riga, Latvia on May 4, 1924. When he asked for a pass, he was told the passport would not be issued without proof of citizenship. He than told the Chancery office to send an official letter asking whether or not the passport would be issued. After

a few days the passport was delivered without condition or comment.

From that time on no one made an issue of his citizenship. It seems that the local officials consulted with Warsaw and were told to drop the whole matter to avoid international diplomatic entanglements.

* * *

The diocese of Vilnius covered over 48,000 square miles and had 1,429,535 Catholics. To give them all the proper care was clearly impossible for one bishop. From the very beginning Bishop Matulaitis found need of an auxiliary bishop. The Poles even criticized him for not having a Polish suffragan and urged him to ask Rome that one be appointed. The Bishop decided in the autumn of 1919 to make this request of Rome and proposed two candidates, one from Vilnius and the other from Warsaw. However, his petition was denied. When Rome consulted with Nuncio Archbishop Ratti about this matter, he explained that if a Pole were to be made suffragan, a White Russian should also be appointed, and it was too early for this.

Bishop Matulaitis alone handled the diocesan needs: visitations, ceremonies, callers, and the extra-curricular problems caused by political intrigues and calumnies. He felt that an auxiliary was absolutely essential. He looked for a suitable candidate diligently and cautiously. He made confidential inquiries among the Polish and Lithuanian clergy and laymen without making a final decision. Finally, he wrote to Rome on November 2, 1922 asking that Monsignor Michalkevicius be appointed his suffragan.

The Papal Nuncio at the time, Archbishop Lauri, asked whether he was no longer interested in the two previously proposed candidates. The Bishop answered that after a more comprehensive knowledge of the diocese, its needs, and the candidates, he was no longer interested in them and gave a summary of his reasons for suggesting Msgr.

Michalkevicius. Though the Monsignor had not been too successful in administering the diocese for an earlier ten year period, he still could be a very good suffragan because he knew the diocese well and had the full confidence of the Polish government.

There was no response from Rome for a long time. In January of 1923, Father Krisciukaitis, in glancing through the most recent issue of the Acta Apostolicae Sedis, found the announcement that Msgr. Michalkevicius had been appointed suffragan bishop of Vilnius. He immediately informed Bishop Matulaitis, who was very pleased. The Bishop hurried to inform Monsignor Michalkevicius. The Monsignor was stunned, unbelieving, and emotional, until he read the communique for himself. Then, in tears, he thanked the Bishop for his great kindness. This was evidence that he had no inkling that he might be an episcopal candidate, and he did not in the least expect it.

What might have been the factors that inclined the Bishop to the choice of Msgr. Michalkevicius? Previously, in suggesting Michalkevicius, the more prominent Lithuanian priests replied almost in unison that he was not a good choice. However, when they listened to the Bishop's reasons, they agreed that it was better to have him than some unknown. The Bishop explained that although Michalkevicius might not have been a very successful administrator, he could be a very good auxiliary because he would not have any direct authority and would do what would be delegated to him.

Moreover, he was very familiar with the diocese, was acceptable to the Polish government, and was favorable to the Bishop. That he was not a crafty politician was evident from several instances of a lack of tact. If another were to be chosen at this time, what guarantee could there be that after becoming suffragan this one would not become a politician and capitulate to nationalistic pressures? Therefore, it was more prudent to deal with a known quantity than to take a gamble.

It took some time for the official documents of

appointment to arrive because they were sent through the Papal representative in Riga and not through the Nuncio in Warsaw. The episcopal ordination took place on June 10, 1923. Bishop Matulaitis tendered an official reception after the services, and on the following day attended a luncheon hosted by Bishop Michalkevicius.

The association between Bishop Matulaitis and his suffragan was friendly. He gave ungrudging compliments when Bishop Michalkevicius did well in his charges, especially in his dealings with the Polish government. One instance of Bishop Matulaitis' confidence in him bears mention. When raids and arrests were being made, Bishop Matulaitis thought that his residence and office might be searched. Hence he entrusted certain confidential documents and letters together with a substantial amount of money to Bishop Michalkevicius for safekeeping.

However, from later actions it cannot be denied that he was not always stable, consistent, and even at times was inclined to close his eyes to the truth. This is evident from the protocol of the diocesan Chapter after Bishop Matulaitis had resigned the bishopric of Vilnius in 1925.

* * *

Bishops in the Catholic Church are appointed by the Pope and are personally responsible to him for a periodic report on the general status of their dioceses. Ordinarily this is done every five years. The personal visit to the Pope is called "Ad limina." The report of Bishop Matulaitis, dated June 11, 1923, consisted of 57 typewritten pages. It was unusual in this that it portrayed a mixture of nationalities scattered through the wide expanses of the diocese like islands with alien elements which for years felt the devastation caused by various warring factions pursuing their own interests.

In the preface to his report, Bishop Matulaitis writes:

> It is now five years that I have been Bishop of Vilnius. As the forces of warring factions raged, especially during the first three

> years, I lived through various changes of government, hardships, and privations, in continual poverty, fear, and uncertainty, and at times in peril of my life.
>
> Since my arrival, there have been eight governments. After the Russians, there were the Germans and Lithuanians, then briefly the Poles, then the Russian communists, then again the Poles and again the communists, the Lithuanians, "Middle Lithuania" under Polish rule and now the Polish Republic. The diocese was a field of battle and devastation. Communication with my priests and people of even the closest deaneries was difficult and at times impossible. The same was true of my communication with the Holy See.

The Bishop describes piecemeal the troubles encountered in the diocese. To maintain a seminary for candidates to the priesthood, even though initially there were only a few seminarians, was a severe burden. At times the school term had to be shortened for lack of funds in the diocese and the Cathedral Chapter. With the incursion of the communists, especially the second time, many priests fled in fear of their lives, sometimes leaving entire deaneries priestless. Eleven priests were executed. Others were jailed, released, and seized again. He writes further:

> Aside from this, it must be stressed that the diocese is made up of diverse elements in religions and nationalities. Because of this, political and nationalistic enmities and contentions thrived resulting in a kind of nationalistic hysteria. Polish nationalistic extremists, by intrigue and provocation, spread outright lies by word of mouth and the press, contrived rumors, and malicious accusations in order to arouse the people against me, and this only for the reason that I am a Lithuanian. What is more, they indulged in overt actions to remove me as Bishop.

Despite such conditions, the Bishop was able to perform his duties, bring order and revise legislation detrimental to the Church. After many years the Papal Nuncio was able again to come in person and lines of communication with him were re-established. The seminary was updated to meet canonical requirements and was able to accept more candidates. The Staff of the Chancery met ecclesial requirements. A faculty of

Theology was introduced at the Vilnius University. A number of churches seized by the Russians were reclaimed from the Orthodox. The diocese itself was now made up of 32 deaneries and 398 parishes. Sixty new parishes had been established. Many religious orders, whose monasteries and convents had been confiscated by the Russians, returned and established houses in the diocese. New religious orders of men and women were founded.

The Ad Limina report with the appendices and explanations was completed on June 11, 1923. The report was characteristic of the Bishop's meticulous attention to accuracy and clarity.

On June 15 he left for Warsaw where he conferred with the Marians relative to matters on the upcoming General Chapter. He also met with Cardinal Kakowski to finalize the juridical status of Marian property in Bielany. In the little time he had, he met with some of his friends and the nuns who had been so good to him in the past. He left for Rome on the morning of the 19th and arrived on the evening of the following day. The Collegium Polonicum of the Resurrectionist Fathers was his usual residence in Rome. He found them very hospitable and most cooperative in facilitating his business.

His first audience with the Holy Father took place on June 25. He was received very cordially, and the Pope thanked him for the books Bishop Bandurski sent him, for a letter from the Visitation nuns, and a pictorial album of Bielany as a memento of where he had made his retreat before his consecration as bishop. The Pope asked for news about Bishop Bandurski, Bishop Michalkevicius, and Canon Lubianiec. Bishop Matulaitis in turn thanked the Pope for his graciousness and was amazed at how well informed the Holy Father was on the progress of the Vilnius diocese.

Later the Bishop paid formal visits to the Polish Ambassadors accredited to the Vatican and to the Quirinal. Ambassador Ladislaus Skrzynski invited him to breakfast on the following day. Bishop Matulaitis was able to meet with Cardinal De Lai of the Congregation for the Religious

only on July 2. There was also business with other Vatican Congregations before he had his parting audience with the Pope and received his Apostolic Blessing.

Before leaving for Rome for the Ad Limina, Bishop Matulaitis, as Superior General of the Marians, had to decide on a site for the General Chapter of the Order. The Marians had already spread through Lithuania, Poland, and the United States. Because of the Vilnius conflict, diplomatic relations between Poland and Lithuania had been severed. Consequently a neutral location had to be found for the Chapter where Marian delegates from various countries could meet. Danzig was finally settled on because it was accessible to the delegates from Poland, Lithuania, and the Lithuanian delegates from the United States. There were no Polish Marians in America as yet. The Chapter was convened on July 15. The host for the gathering was Bishop Edward O'Rourke, a good friend of Bishop Matulaitis.

The Superior General and twelve delegates from two vicariates participated. There were 14 points on the agenda,

Delegates at 1923 Danzig General Chapter

the first of which was the election of a Superior General. Bishop Matulaitis was elected unanimously. The other elected officials were: Fathers Bucys, Bronikowski, Krisciukaitis, and Wisniewski. Father Krisciukaitis was also elected General Secretary, and Father Jakowski Econome. The Vicar General for Lithuania and the United States was Father Bucys, and Father Bronikowski the Vicar General for Poland. Circumstances at the time were such that to hold meetings was extremely difficult. The more important business was transacted through the mails. One of the matters on the agenda for the Chapter was the special attention the Order was to pay to the juniorates for its own candidates. After the Chapter, Bishop Matulaitis went to Kitzingen for medical care and rest until August 18.

* * *

When Bishop Matulaitis was appointed to Vilnius he had no illusions that a Lithuanian bishop would not meet opposition from Polish chauvinists. The Polish Catholics in Vilnius considered Catholicism their special monopoly. It could not be Lithuanian, or White Russian. It was unthinkable that it be anything but Polish. The Church had to serve polonizing interests. As Bishop Matulaitis was preparing to go to Rome with his quinquennial diocesan report, Polish extremists hastened to compose a memorandum demanding that he be removed from Vilnius.

Usually the complaints made against Bishop Matulaitis were in letters sent to Rome by mail or messenger in the name of an organization or a private individual. In 1923 the complaints took the form of an open letter, 38 pages in length, composed in French, and printed as a pamphlet, demanding through Archbishop Lauri, Nuncio in Warsaw, that Bishop Matulaitis be removed from Vilnius. It bore the signatures of 37 citizens prominent in government and academic circles. The bill of complaints enumerated the "transgressions" of the Bishop in detail and at great length.

Mrs. Maria Weyssenhoff was given this pamphlet to read by another lady and as she was paging through it she found her own name listed among the signatories. She had not even heard of this letter previously, much less signed it. In great distress she appealed to one, then another Church official in an attempt to exonerate herself and ask for advice. Neither of them would even listen. Then Canon Viskantas helped her compose a telegram of repudiation and a letter of explanation to be sent to Rome.

What reaction this pamphlet, this open letter, had in Rome is seen from the letter the Administrator Canon Kukta received in Kaisiadorys from the Bishop then resting in Kitzingen:

> My dear friend: I have not written until now because Father Vaitkevicius intended to give you a word-of-mouth account of a number of things. While in Rome, I became exhausted because there were so many things to do, but I feel that the more important tasks were successfully accomplished. The Holy Father was very kind to me, as were Cardinals De Lai and Gasparri with whom I had the most business. I was told that Rome had received a goodly number of complaints about me, but no substantial facts.
>
> The Polish Ambassador to the Holy See told me that despite his request for facts and proofs, none were given him except the one that alleges that I had appointed a White Russian priest as pastor of a Polish parish. The Ambassador did not mention his name nor where this was done.
>
> The Holy Father told me: 'Yes, the Poles have only one complaint against you based in fact. You are a Lithuanian.' The steady stream of Polish complaints to Rome became tiresome. Even while I was in Rome, the Nuncio in Warsaw received an elaborate memorandum against me. The authors, by some species of 'editorial license,' included the signatures of some people who knew nothing about it. When these people discovered this, they immediately denied the validity of their signatures and wrote to Rome about it. This caused some merriment. In fact, Cardinal Gasparri burst into laughter when he related this to me. 'Iniquitas mentita est sibimetipsi.' Evil deceived even itself. I commit all this to the Providence of God and to the will of the Holy See. According to its will I shall remain in Vilnius, and if it be that I am to be released, I shall be happy. We held our General Chapter in Danzig, and this took its toll of my energies. Now I feel rested

and at my leisure I am revising the Marian constitutions according to the new Code of Canon Law.

From all I heard and experienced in Rome, I am of the firm opinion that Lithuania should hurry to sign a Concordat with the Holy See. On the occasions when I discussed this with Father Bucys, my companion in Rome, we thought that you, as Administrator of the Lithuanian section of the diocese, might take this up with the Lithuanian bishops. My thought is that it might be well to arrange matters in this fashion: 1) That an Apostolic Administrator be appointed for the region of Klaipėda; 2) The Samogitian Diocese should be divided in two: Kaunas and Siauliai; 3) The Lithuanian section of the Vilnius diocese should remain as is, at least temporarily. This would create an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Lithuania. Catholics are now at the head of government and this would be the time for the Church to gain its full freedom and independence.

I send sincere greetings to all the priests. I commend myself to your prayers and give you my blessing. Sincerely, Bishop George.

The aforementioned open letter of complaint was not unique. Others in like vein were sent to the Polish government in Warsaw, to the bishops of Poland, the Nuncio and, of course, to Rome.

The Polish Ambassador to the Holy See, Skrzynski, wrote on May 9, 1924 to Warsaw, that apart from the memoranda complaining about Bishop Matulaitis to reach him through official channels, equally as many privately requested that he be retained as Bishop of Vilnius. What is more significant, Skrzynski states, one of the Polish bishops assured him that he had seen the same signatures affixed to more than one memorandum. Then he adds, that if there is such temerity as to forge signatures on printed documents intended for wide, public, and even international notice, how much more should the validity of signatures be suspect on documents not intended for public circulation.

From the very beginning of 1919, the Polish press in Vilnius, especially that of the Nationalists, the extremists, began its attacks on Bishop Matulaitis, demanding his removal because somehow he had "discovered" Lithuanians and White Russians living in the Vilnius diocese. According

to the Nationalist mentality, every Catholic is a Pole, and only Poles are Catholics. Therefore, their ultimatum: "Remove the Lithuanian bishop from Polish soil!"

The most virulent propagandist was the editor of the "Vilnius Daily," Jan Obst, whom the people nicknamed "Pope of Vilnius." There was no church problem or matter on which he did not take an adversary stand against Bishop Matulaitis, venting his spleen on a person respected by the Holy See and the majority of the clergy. It was only a small proportion of the clergy who were infected by the extremism of the Nationalists.

Obst's newspaper was not alone in this antagonism. There were others, such as "Rzeczpospolita" and the "Warsaw Gazette." The greatest disappointment and problem for these newspapers was that they were not read by the masses, which could be reached only through the Church. Hence, a Polish bishop was the answer.

The "Vilnius Daily" carried on an unremitting campaign by printing lies and slanders that the Bishop was displacing Polish pastors and substituting Lithuanians or White Russians; that in some parishes the pastor was a bolshevik, a demagogue, or a deviate. These were the tactics used by the Nationalists to gain control over the Church and holy places, to subject the supervision of the clergy to the civil authorities as was done with the Orthodox clergy in Russia.

The Nationalists would not accept that the diocese is not homogeneous in nationality, even though the majority of the villages were Lithuanian or White Russian, and only the cities and the landowners were predominantly Polish or polonized. Bishop Matulaitis could not accept this sophistry because he saw that the smaller nations now had an opportunity to be free of suffocating imperialism and were rightfully asserting their national identities. The Church, in his mind, had to provide free access to all in search of spiritual guidance without police regimentation or the clamor of the press.

As had been mentioned, the Bishop did not indulge in

any polemics and bore the slanders silently, finding comfort and strength in prayer. Because the Bishop did not engage in political skirmishes and ignored Obst's diatribes, the Poles concluded that Vilnius was not the place for him.

* * *

When the region of Vilnius was annexed to Poland in 1922, a special Ministry of Information was established by the government. Its head was attorney Valery Roman. That department was in reality a security agency with a wide network of informers. One of the special duties of this agency was to report on all the activities of Bishop Matulaitis. The reports (secret, of course), were sent to the Polish Council of Ministers, the Department of Religion and Education, Department of the Interior, the Foreign Affairs Department, the Polish Ambassador to the Vatican, and even to the Roman Curia.

The Office had a staff of salaried agents who found ready informants among the landowners, university professors, and even the Chancery Office. One of these was Father Leon Puciata, who at one time had been sent to inform Rome about the Bishop's "transgressions." Some years later (1940), he told Father Ladislaus Rusznicki about this and expressed regret for giving false testimony.

Mr. Roman was personally antagonistic to the Bishop. He reproached him for being unpatriotic and for being a traitor to the State. He repeated the old canards about systematically favoring Lithuanian and White Russian priests who were enemies of the State, about having Lithuanian patriots as his closest associates. His closeness to the Chancellor Canon Chalecki and Msgr. Michalkevicius were alleged to be clever moves to allay suspicion.

Allegations were also made that in making parish visitations he spent more time in Lithuanian and White Russian parishes than he did in Polish ones, using this as an opportunity to foment or strengthen anti-Polish sentiment

through his personality and deportment as a good priest. He was also accused of being in favor of union with the Orthodox.

In Roman's conversations and attitudes, the Bishop's activities were characterized as an attempt to dispossess the Church of the Poles. He saw the Bishop as insisting that the Lithuanians and the White Russians were the original settlers and the real proprietors of the Vilnius region with no priorities for the Poles. There were many evidences of this, he claimed, but it would be a waste of time to search for factual proof which would indict the Bishop of anti-government crimes or transgressions and violated Canon Law since the Bishop was too clever of a tactician to be patently involved in any illegalities.

Even the Department of the Interior noticed that there were too many discrepancies between Roman's allegations and his conclusions. With these discrepancies in mind, the Department asked him to sent only authentic documents: pastoral letters, copies of regulations, personal letters, minutes of public utterances, testimony of witnesses, etc. Roman's reply, in self-justification, was this:

> Technically, the Bishop's actions are irreproachable and consistent with his position. Personally, as a man and a priest, he is deserving of respect. In spite of this, for the good of the State, it must be said that he should be removed as Bishop. However, his removal should have the appearance of a promotion to a higher level in the Church's hierarchy, so that we would not be accused of plaguing him.

From this decision, worthy of King Solomon, speculations were rife that Bishop Matulaitis would be appointed to the new bishopric of Czestochowa, site of a famous Shrine to Mary, which would be very appropriate for a Marian monk. When the rumor reached the Bishop he made this comment: "Are the Poles in Czestochowa any less Poles than they are in Vilnius?"

* * *

Bishop Matulaitis lived in Vilnius as though in a prison. Politics and military actions created a situation that made it practically impossible to travel freely. He was not only a bishop but also a Superior General of a religious order. The largest group of Marians lived in the United States where the first house was founded by the Superior General himself in 1913. In Poland, Marian houses came into being only after World War I had ended. The Marians in Lithuania were revived only in 1918. Those farthest from him were more accessible to him than those closer to him in distance because of the Polish-Lithuanian political curtain.

The concerns of the Marians were close to the Bishop's heart because they were still in the formation stage and needed advice and direction in their projects. The greatest part of his correspondence was with Marians, superiors and individual members. He knew practically all of them personally and was aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

During the years of his bishopric (1918-1925), he wrote 296 Polish letters which cover 312 typewritten pages; 294 Lithuanian letters consisting of 501 pages. His 182 Latin letters take up 517 typewritten pages and are official communiques and reports to Papal Nuncios, the Holy See, and bishops. These span the time of his episcopate (317 pages), and his term as Apostolic Visitator (200 pages). All these letters are found in the general archives of the Marian Congregation in Rome and form a part of the process of beatification of Archbishop Matulaitis.

The predominant theme of the letters was concern for the religious Order: the arrangements and supervision of individual houses, novitiate, their apostolic mission, schools, and individual members, both priests and brothers. Finding candidates for the Order and the establishment of juniorates was a constant concern.

Of the Polish letters, 45 were sent to Father Casimir

Bronikowski, 25 to Father Vladimir Jakowski, 27 to Father Stephen Warszawski, and some to Sister Wanda Jeute.

The greatest number of Lithuanian letters (74), were spent to Father Francis Bucys, his closest collaborator and Vicar General of the Order. Very important letters were sent to the United States because the Marians there had ideal opportunities to fulfill the specific mission set for the Order and were able to provide the greater part of financial assistance. Father Felix Kudirka received 23 letters and Father Vincent Kulikauskas 31. The Bishop also wrote to Fathers Casimir Reklaitis, Joseph Vaitkevicius, and others on various matters.

Among the letters must be included the many official documents he found necessary to send to Canon Joseph Kukta, the Administrator of the Lithuanian section of the Vilnius diocese.

The mails were used in sending these letters, and at times when this service was unavailable or uncertain, letters were entrusted to travelers who offered the Bishop this service. For reasons of security or secrecy, official communiques with Nuncios and the Apostolic See were entrusted exclusively to dependable couriers.

Bishop Matulaitis had the gift of an uncommon rapport with people. His sincerity and modesty attracted people. This is not said in flattery, but is an acknowledgment of the gifts which emanated from his deep spirituality and his closeness to God. The way he treated people was the reflection of his virtues. This was not an affectation but the result of his honest and eager attempt to know a person at heart and his or her needs, feelings, thoughts, and desires.

This trait was evident in his every action. His cordiality and sincerity disarmed even his enemies, and made communication easier. This quality was especially necessary as a superior for a religious community. Each member was able to approach him as he would a father, with confidence that he would be heard and understood, even though he might in conscience feel that he was worthy of reproof.

At times news reached him about some abuse or offense. He heard the matter patiently and sympathetically. He was concerned not so much with human frailty and mistakes as he was with the effects they had on the human soul and the tie with God. At times, as though in self-reproof, he was heard to repeat to himself, 'he had to be told, he had to be told straightforwardly and sternly.' And then in place of anger he would find himself giving fatherly advice. Often he would make some general observation which the offender could easily apply to himself. At times he would blame himself for not having done his duty in dealing with some matter more sternly.

As Superior General his most frequent callers were Marian priests and brothers with spiritual and personal problems. Most needed only to be affirmed and enouraged. There was the occasional one who postulated restraint and correction.

To appreciate better the spirit of the Bishop's letters and their message, a few examples are given here. From a letter of March 19, 1920 to Father Bucys in America:

> My dear brother: A war-time status still prevails here. Life is difficult. I get news from Mariampole only occasionally. Under these conditions I find it hard to give you proper directives. Therefore, in the affairs of the Order, take care of things as you feel proper, always keeping in mind the glory of God and the good of the community. I hereby give you all necessary delegations. And you, my dear brother, remain in America and continue your work as long as necessary. Try to remain calm, don't worry and become upset. Take care of your health. You promised some Mass stipends. If possible, send them through Kaunas or Mariampole.
>
> The same troubles and hardships beset me. It is so hard to bear up under constant nationalistic bickerings and misunderstandings. Thus far I have not been caught up in them despite many attacks. The future is uncertain, and I wonder if my nerves and health will hold up. God's will be done! Remember me in your prayers. Bishop George.

September 28, 1920, to Father Bucys:

> As I write this, the Polish troops are again pressing on Vilnius. Living conditions were somewhat normal for a time, and now they

are being disrupted again. When the bolsheviks came, many of the Polish priests fled and left entire deaneries without priests. If the Polish forces are victorious, things will be different, and I wonder if I might not have to leave. Although I do not involve myself in these changing political scenes, it is evident that they will not tolerate a Lithuanian bishop in Vilnius. Let us pray that God will grant us peace. +Bishop George.

November 2, 1920, to Brother Joseph Jarzebowski in Warsaw:

Joseph: If only I could leave Vilnius and work again with you as we did before in Warsaw. Nothing can be done but to remain here as this is the Pope's wish. It is difficult! God's will be done. Perhaps the Almighty will have pity on me and let met leave Vilnius.

December 21, 1920, to Brother Jarzebowski again:

Joseph, We cannot give in to discouragement. It is good to have high ideals, but let us remember that these are attained through ordinary day-by-day striving; by bearing up under hardships, labors, imperfections, and failures. When we follow our chosen path with faith, it can lead only forward. Have faith in God's grace and help.

December 26, 1920, to Father Jakowski in Bielany:

Troubles and hardships as usual. The "Warsaw Gazette" does not ignore me with its many lies, slanders, and accusations against me. When one is afflicted with jaundice, everything looks yellow. Parcat illis Deus (may God have mercy on them).

April 3, 1920, to Father Bucys in Chicago:

Thank God, there has been no severe shortage of food yet, but other conditions are more difficult to bear. This may not be hell, but it is certainly purgatory.

May 8, 1920, to Father Bronikowski in Rasna:

Please excuse me for not writing for such a long time... I know that they accuse me of many things. Don't believe them, but ask for facts and then let me know. Uncertainty and instability take their toll. My nerves are strained... the constant accusations, arguments, and attacks make the atmosphere unbearable. If this is not my purgatory, it is not much better.

October 12, 1922, to Father Bucys in Kaunas:

My dear Francis: I received your letter of September 26. In answer to your inquiries, it is necessary only that we keep uppermost in our minds the glory of God and the good of the Church and our Order. I see that you take my every word, direction, counsel or wish as a matter of precept. Consult among yourselves and decide according to your insights what is best for the glory of God.

November 22, 1922, to Father Ladislaus Lysik in Rasna:

When God gives us the opportunity to recognize our faults and frailties, this is His precious grace. We should not be discouraged but persevere. Our Lord will always accept our efforts and good will since 'infirma et ignobilia elegit Deus' (God has chosen the weak and the lowly).

December 16, 1922, to Sister Wanda Jeute:

It is painful and sad when I see so much hatred among nations, classes, and individuals. I desire so much to love all without partiality... In place of a Christmas wafer, I enclose a holy card with a blessing and greeting that Jesus always reign in your heart.

May 3, 1923, to Father Jakowski in Cambridge, Mass.:

It is my intention that in time we shall be able to have a house for the Marians working among the Polish immigrants in America. For the moment I hesitate because there is a shortage of personnel... Thus far the relations between our Polish and Lithuanian houses have been excellent. I trust that this will continue, because our mission is not to solve political problems nor to set boundaries, but to serve the God and the Church of all nations. The Order is becoming more international and universal. Two Latvian priests have joined us. In God's good time the Marians will be established in Latvia. The White Russians are founding a house in Druja. I wrote to the Marians in Chicago to accept candidates of various nationalities into their juniorate.

November 11, 1923, to Father Jarzebowski:

Dear Father Joseph: You write that you have many troubles, but these are only small crosses. In the life of a priest there will be many more and bigger ones. This is not unusual since we are

priests of the Crucified Christ. Thank God that our work in Lublin has begun. I extend my best wishes and blessing.

November 29, 1923, to Father Bucys in Kaunas. Among many other things the Bishop writes:

I have finished the work of putting in order and revising our constitutions. The Polish newspapers are again subjecting me to the vilest slanders. A group of priests and many landowners join in this villification. Beyond the verbal abuse, an occasional threat to my life is made. God's will be done. I tell them repeatedly that I shall not leave here until the Pope orders me to do so. Otherwise, thank God, I am in good health and am able to do my work. Ordinarily I arise at three or four o'clock in the morning. Now that I have finished the constitutions, I shall begin to prepare for the Synod. Father John sends his greetings. I extend my greetings for the coming Holy Season and I bless you with all my heart.

January 26, 1924, to Father Bucys in Kaunas:

I have finished writing the Instructions and also the formularies according to which the superiors of the various houses are to make their annual reports. I fell that the new Constitutions and Instructions will help in establishing a systematic order.

My dear brother, all must be arranged and order insisted on by being firm in purpose and kindly in manner ('fortiter in re, suaviter in modo'). At times we have to suffer disappointments and be patient. I like your suggestion of a central provincial bursary...

Father John and I are disturbed and cannot understand how matters are going between the monasteries in Mariampole and Kaunas. The one and the other are making countercharges of exploitation. As Father Matulaitis writes, they are beginning to run their accounts in almost Jewish fashion as to who owes what to whom and for what. In truth our means are for common benefit. We educate our young brothers and priests not for the benefit of Mariampole, Kaunas, or Chicago, but for the common good of the Order, for the benefit of the Church and for the glory of God... All should be equally concerned that our common treasury be used for the most important needs of the entire community.

It is sad that some are so prone to suspect and fault each other by questioning motives without knowing what is in their heart. We are to accept everything in fraternal charity. Encourage all in this. I bless all of you. +Bishop George.

Many different problems and events were touched on

in the Bishop's letters. Our attention might be turned to the insights and policies Bishop Matulaitis had in the areas of education and discipline. November 27, 1924, to Father Wisniewski in Bielany:

> My dear Father: Medical doctors, teachers, and priests confirm the fact that there is an increase in moral turpitude among young people. It is the exceptional young man who retains his baptismal innocence. Downfalls may be frequent, but we cannot consider them all as sins of perversion and malice. Often this is due to human frailty, instability, or even physiological or psychological illness. This is affirmed by the famous educator and psychologist, Franciscan Augustine Gemelli (1878-1959), the founder, rector, and professor of the University of Milan in his treatise 'Non Moechaberis.'
>
> I am not shocked that even in Bielany there are lapses and sexual deviation. The incident you relate is serious and reprehensible. You should not be deterred from doing your duty, but you should increase your awareness that such things happen, and that the weak or the sick are in special need of our charity and help. For such souls, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, use also the measures proposed by hygienics, sound pedagogy, and especially by our holy faith.
>
> Doubtless, we have to react to the presence of evil and exercise remedial punishment in proportion to the offense and other circumstances. No universal norms can be set, but are to be dealt with individually. Corporal punishment as an educational device is undesirable, and I forbid it. Expulsion from school should be the final recourse, and it should be used only if the youngster is incorrigible and a source of scandal to others.
>
> To the three questions you put to me, my dear Father, I give no firm answer. Each offense deserves full investigation of all the circumstances. I think you did well in not expelling the two youngsters who openly admitted their transgression and promised sincerely to reform. Expulsion could have been the cause of their final ruin.
>
> Your decision not to allow these young men to attend religious instruction classes was not becoming to a religious and a teacher. Where can sinners turn except to Christ, the real teacher of religion? What does Christ tell us in the Gospels? What do they teach us of how Christ dealt with sinners, of his sympathy and love? Please remember the parable of the Prodigal Son, and what Christ said to the Jews who were ready to stone the woman taken in sin, and how he rebuked the Apostles who wanted to draw

down fire from heaven on the sinful city. And what about St. Augustine's youth and his later life?

I am pleased, dear Father, that you detest evil and that you are inclined to attack it strongly, but I am saddened that you are lacking in forgiveness, kindness, and love for the erring. Your radical method in the apostleship without compunction is not Christ's and will not bear good fruit.

If you do not look to your own weakness, but condemn and punish others without mercy, I am afraid that God might allow you some serious downfall as a punishment.

I would suggest, Father, that you develop a deep devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Immerse yourself deeply in that Divine Heart and remember the words: 'Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.'

In the opinion of the saints, we shall be justified before God more easily for an excess of compassion than for an excess of severity.

Yours in prayer, Father, and I extend my greetings and blessing. +Bishop George.

Chapter 11

Resignation from Vilnius

Bishop Matulaitis governed the Diocese of Vilnius from December 8, 1918 to August 3, 1925. Practically from the beginning of his tenure he experienced hostility from Polish nationalists for being Lithuanian, for refraining from any polonizing activity, and for forbidding his priests to make Poles of people who did not feel they were Poles.

This position was contrary to the nationalist policy of the Poles and aroused the ire of their government so much as to make it heedless of the means it took to accomplish its aims. The initial attack was a scandalous smear-campaign in the newspapers subservient to the government. Regrettably, the press which considered itself Catholic, also joined in these attacks.

The Polish Government entered into a Concordat with the Holy See on February 10, 1925 wherein it was foreseen to elevate the diocese of Vilnius to an Archdiocese. Among the other stipulations was the traditional one that persons promoted to episcopal sees be approved by the State to determine whether anything of a political nature would make them unacceptable. According to this article, the appointment for a new Archbishop would be subject to government approval. Bishop Matulaitis was sure that he would be denied government approval because of political reasons. It was rumored in Vilnius that if the Holy See insisted on Bishop Matulaitis remaining, he would be removed by force. In a letter of April 2, 1925 to Father Warszawski in Bielany, the Bishop includes this comment:

> Rumors have been flying for some time that I shall be leaving Vilnius. I am beginning to believe them. God alone knows what the future will bring. I would then be free to devote all my energy to the Order.

The whole procedure of resignation moved along secretly and with the tact befitting a true religious and a perfect gentleman. His first letter to the Pope on this matter, written on May 1, 1925, was entrusted to a priest for secret and personal delivery to the Pope. In it Bishop Matulaitis wrote:

> After full deliberation, I think it is time, for the good of the Church, that I be recalled from Vilnius. The relations between the Poles and the Lithuanians have deteriorated almost into a state of war. The inability to get along together, the mutual suspicions and lack of trust are not diminishing but growing worse. So it is not surprising that the Poles cannot tolerate me, a Lithuanian bishop, ruling a diocese in the Polish Republic. They are firmly determined, when this diocese is raised to the rank of an archbishopric, that I in no way will remain as archbishop.
>
> The political parties, especially the 'Nationalist Democracy,' which has great influence in the Republic, have launched a smear-campaign of such proportions that many Poles look at me with suspicion and consider me an enemy of the State. My every action is scrutinized and given the worst possible interpretation. This distrust is becoming more and more evident and there is no hope that it will decrease. I see clearly that the Government also considers me a persona non grata.
>
> In such a situation, it is clear that I cannot fulfill my duties as freely as I should... I take this action, not to rid myself of the cross which God in His goodness gave me to bear, but only desiring the greater glory of God and the good of His Church. Therefore, Holy Father, I place all of this fully in your hands and bow to your will. You know, Beloved Father, that I am prepared to suffer all for Christ and His Church.

While he waited for an answer, Bishop Matulaitis turned his attention to the needs of his Congregation. In his letter to Father Bucys on June 15, 1925, which dealt mainly with administrative matters, he writes not a word about the resignation and lightly complains:

It is so confining here and so difficult. Those constant smears and attacks in the newspapers! Perhaps the Holy Father will be merciful and remove me from Vilnius, but it is God's will. Only God knows and sees how much I have to suffer here. I console myself only with the fact that Christ, the most Innocent One, had to suffer so much more here on earth. I wonder when, in God's Providence, I shall be able to see you. I miss all of you so much. There is so much more that I would want to do for the Order.

An indirect answer came from Rome on June 1, 1925 in a letter from Cardinal Gasparri to the Papal Nuncio in Warsaw, Archbishop Lauri.

I have paid very close attention to all Your Excellency reported about your conversations with Bishop Matulaitis from whom His Holiness also received a letter. Please convey to Bishop Matulaitis that the Holy See is very much aware of the worsening conditions in which he finds himself, and that it never had any grounds to question his actions in governing the diocese in these difficult conditions. Moreover, it never gave credence to the allegations made by his enemies. On the contrary, it went out of its way to defend him. However, if the Bishop is of a mind to resign because of these difficulties, then he can with complete candor request this of His Holiness, explaining his motives, and the Holy See will give due consideration.

Emboldened by this, Bishop Matulaitis wrote a long and touching letter to Pope Pius XI, dated June 27, 1925, in which he detailed all the reasons for which he felt compelled to resign. Because the Bishop had never made these reasons public, which led to his being blamed for resigning without sufficient cause, and in the interests of truth, the entirety of his letter is here cited:

Most Holy Father:

Prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, I beg and most respectfully request that you relieve me of my duties as Bishop of Vilnius. I am compelled to make this request for the following reasons. Recently there was a war between Poland and Lithuania and war-time conditions still exist because the Lithuanians do not relinquish their rights to Vilnius and the surrounding territories. The Poles are trying to convince the world that this city and adjacent areas are Polish and, therefore, by right should belong to Poland. The Poles are attempting to polonize the non-Polish

inhabitants as quickly as they can, using every means possible, even force.

All this makes my situation as a Lithuanian unusually difficult, and it becomes more critical because the Poles have become the dominant class controlling just about the totality of public life. They are the government. By the same token, because I am a Lithuanian, I am unacceptable in the eyes of the Poles as though guilty of some original sin. For this reason my every action is open to suspicion, public criticism, and misinterpretation.

The greatest thrust of the Poles is to have their own man as bishop of Vilnius. Only because I am a Lithuanian they hold me as a constant obstacle to their every purpose and aim. In Vilnius I was barely tolerated as a bishop, and now that the See may be elevated to the rank of an archdiocese, it is unthinkable that they will ever consent that I remain as archbishop. Under these conditions a Polish bishop or archbishop would not have even one-hundredth of the hardships which have been premeditatedly designed for me.

When this region was occupied by the Germans, the opportunities for all the nationalities were practically the same. At that time the Poles required of me that I treat everyone with comparable equality, and they did admit that I succeeded in this. But later, when the same area came under their domination, their political parties, especially the one called 'Nationalist Democracy,' which carried much weight in the State, immediately began to use all means and ways, systematically and with ferocity, to attack me by the spoken word, the press, and in public meetings.

By their constant and unrelenting accusations, recriminations, and slanders demeaning and besmirching me, they tried to portray me as a completely despicable person. Now they have reached the state where in the eyes of many I am some sort of monster breathing only hatred and destruction for the Poles. Hence, many consider me an enemy of the Polish nation and State. In addition, they take every opportunity to make my life more bitter and practically unbearable, and the performance of my duties difficult and almost impossible. They use every means to incite the people against me, to intimidate me, even to threatening my life.

In my pastoral work I see and feel that I am increasingly being hampered. More and more frequently I sense that if it were not for the sustaining grace of Christ and His Cross, and my obedience to the Holy See, I would not be able to bear up under these pressures and could succumb. Whatever might be, the longer these conditions persist, this controversy with the bishop cannot but bear evil fruits. It affronts God. It harms and misleads many of the faithful, lessens the authority of the bishop and also touches on

the prestige of the Holy See. No good can come from this to the Church or the State.

As long as matters were not yet certain, I told the Holy See openly that the time or the necessity for removing me had not yet come. But now that ecclesial matters have been stabilized and are being handled differently under the new Concordat, and after serious thought and pondering in the sight of God, I see and feel that the time has now come for me to be released from Vilnius as soon as possible. This is the general and evident desire of the Poles. Even the Catholic newspapers affirm that I will not remain in Vilnius.

As far as the Lithuanians and White Russians are concerned, they are amazed that I have been able to function in my duties as well and as long as I have under the circumstances. Now they understand clearly that I will no longer be able effectively to perform my duties. The Lithuanians will look upon the granting of my request as another act of kindness and mercy tendered me by the Holy See.

It is the founded opinion of thoughtful minds that after the Concordat, if I remain in Vilnius, political opportunists might expel me even by force. With confidence in the grace of God, I am prepared for any eventuality, but it seems to me it would not benefit the Church in any way.

My Dearest Father, I am very mindful of how much fatherly kindness you have shown me, and how well you have supported me. I have, as an eternal remembrance of your kindness, the letter you sent me, your very humble servant, so soon after ascending the Throne of Peter. Here it is widely thought and broadcast that I have not only your personal trust, but moreover, and I hesitate to say it, that I am being coddled by your friendship. After God, I ascribe only to your kindness and encouragement the fact that I have been able somehow to survive and perform my duties in the face of the extreme difficulties my enemies placed in my path, who having threatened harm did not dare to carry out their plans.

The kindness and every possible support of the Apostolic Nunciature in Poland was also a source of strength and encouragement to me.

It is amazing how much evil lurks in the hearts of men. Why look for other examples? Evil you fully experienced yourself, Holy Father, when you were Nuncio to Poland. Even though you strove to do nothing but good and showed nothing but charity and kindness, and even though you loved the Polish nation so much and did so much for it, your were still attacked so immorally and viciously, despite the fact that you were blameless.

Relying on the kindness you have shown me, Holy Father, I dare to request a further favor, namely, that when I shall have been relieved of the bishopric of Vilnius, I remain in Rome and give full attention to the affairs of the Marian Congregation of which I am the Superior General, so that this work entrusted to me by God's Providence and the will of the Holy See might be led towards its goal.

Prostrate before your Apostolic Throne and in deepest homage, I submit totally to your eminent will and beg your Apostolic Blessing.

Your Holiness' most obedient and devoted son,
George Matulaitis,
Bishop of Vilnius,
Given at Vilnius on the 27th day of June 1925.

When he finished this letter, Bishop Matulaitis felt a great relief, even though he was exhausted. While waiting for an answer from Rome, he wrote a letter on July 7, 1925 to Father Bucys in Kaunas.

I plan to go to Ciechocinek for treatment and rest. I might even get the chance to go to Rome. Conditions here have not abated. If the Holy Father takes me from Vilnius, it will be an act of mercy inspired by his kindness of heart. If it were not for the grace of God, and if it were not for the example of Christ and His Cross, it would be impossible to survive in this atmosphere. I send my greetings to all. Please pray that God will bring my problems to a happy conclusion, that I may devote myself to the Marians and their apostolates. Affectionately and with blessings on all.

+George.

The Bishop arrived in Ciechocinek on July 13. The doctor found a case of complete exhaustion, and this in addition to the illness which had plagued him throughout his life. His rest was not peaceful as he waited for an answer from Rome. He wrote a letter to Father Bucys again on the 19th. Among other things we read:

I still have no news as to what is going to happen to me. I trust that the Holy Father will consider the good of the Church and my difficult position and will free me of Vilnius... I expect to get an answer some time this month or in August at the latest.

Soon after mailing this letter, he heard from the

Nuncio in Warsaw that Cardinal Gasparri's answer of July 14, 1925 had arrived. The pertinent excerpt:

> It saddened His Holiness to learn from your letter that you repeat your request to be relieved of the bishopric of Vilnius. However, the reasons you gave for taking this step are so important and serious that the Holy Father considers it his duty to acquiesce. Therefore, I hereby announce to you that His Holiness has accepted your resignation as Bishop of Vilnius and also grants you permission, as you requested, to take up residence at once in Rome where you can pursue your rightful duties in the Marian Order as its Superior General. In acknowledgment of your accomplishments and for the honor you deserve in serving the Church so well, His Holiness promises you, as a sign of his gratitude, to support you fully in the sphere of your new duties. And as a reward for your many labors performed so well in the Lord's vineyard and in token of God's abundant graces, His Holiness imparts from his heart his Apostolic Blessing.

All the correspondence with Rome was handled in secrecy by the Nuncio in Warsaw, Archbishop Lauri. No one in Vilnius knew about this. Meanwhile the Polish Government was seriously planning to transfer Bishop Matulaitis to the newly created bishopric of Czestochowa. When he returned from Ciechocinek to Vilnius, the bishop quickly put all his affairs in order and, without saying a word to anyone, on August 1 quietly slipped out of the city of his torments, leaving the final disposition of the details to Father John Krisciukaitis.

During a short visit to Warsaw, he bade farewell to the Marians and his close friends. From there he wrote a letter to the diocesan Chapter in Vilnius confirming his resignation and with instructions to select an Administrator. He also wrote short letters of farewell to Bishop Bandurski, Bishop Michalkevicius, his Suffragan, to Msgr. Hanusowicz, dean of the Chapter, and to Canon Viskantas. In addition, he sent an official notice of his resignation to the Polish Minister of Worship and Education.

Just before he left Warsaw for Rome on August 3, he wrote a very cordial letter to the Chancellor Canon Chalecki, thanking him for his unfailing cooperation, for

his wise and practical advice, and for his loyalty to the bishop which at times demanded courage to ignore possible unpleasantness for himself.

> I have so many emotions which I am unable to put on paper. You know, my dear Father Lucian, that I have the greatest affection for you and that I am so very grateful to you. It was good for us to work together, for God was with us. Very cordially yours, + Bishop George.

* * *

The Bishop arrived in Rome on August 5 and stayed with the Polish Resurrectionist Fathers on Via S. Sebastianello. There he found his successor to Vilnius, Archbishop John Cieplak, a colleague from his days at the Institute in St. Petersburg. Bishop Matulaitis deliberately chose to make his first residence with the Poles, so they would not think that he was angry with them or that he did not want anything to do with them. No one in Rome knew as yet that his departure from Vilnius was final.

On the following day he went to the Vatican to arrange for an audience with the Pope. It was there he found out that the Polish government had already taken steps to have him transferred to Czestochowa. That same day he went to the Polish Embassy at the Vatican and found only one of the secretaries, Mr. Perzowski. The Bishop told him that he would not be returning to Vilnius and assured him that he held no resentments toward the Poles and would not in any way harm them. This was typical of him from the earliest days of his priesthood. He was always careful not to hurt people. Here again he lived out the motto on his heraldic coat of arms: "Vince Malum in Bono."

Mr. Perzowski was anxious to explain that the Government had nothing against him as a bishop. On the contrary, in its reports to the Holy See it praised him and tried to have him transferred to Czestochowa. It was for political reasons that it could not consent that he remain in

Vilnius. The Bishop told him that he understood perfectly and that he wanted to live in harmony with the Poles. This visit must have made a good impression on the secretary, because he told the Bishop's departing companion: "That was a fine gesture on the part of the Bishop." The Bishop visited some of the other Polish dignitaries in Rome and then told the Resurrectionist Fathers that he had resigned from Vilnius.

When he wrote to Father Bucys in Kaunas he stated that he would like to establish a Marian house of studies in Rome before autumn.

> If the Lithuanian press misinterprets my resignation from Vilnius or dares to blame the Holy Father in any way, explain to the media that the Pope could not have done anything else but accept my resignation. It would have been sheer insanity for me to remain there any longer. In releasing me from Vilnius the Holy Father performed an act of mercy. Please make the same announcement to our members in Mariampole and to the Superior of the Sisters of the Poor.

He wrote a letter of the same tenor to Father Vincent Kulikauskas in Chicago and asked him to inform the Sisters of St. Casimir. Then he asked that Father Casimir Reklaitis, who knew the Eternal City so well and spoke Italian fluently, leave America and join him in Rome.

On August 13, the Bishop had a private audience with Pope Pius XI and was received very kindly. In their conversation he was assured that he did the right thing in asking to be released since the Polish Government would have vetoed his remaining as Archbishop. At the same time the Pope confirmed and validated all dispensations Bishop Matulaitis had to grant while governing the diocese throughout those difficult years in Vilnius. He also gave the Marians permission to establish a house in Rome and promised them his every help.

Other matters at the Vatican had to be postponed because officialdom was on vacation. Moreover, Rome was very crowded because of the Holy Year. An excursion of Polish pilgrims was in Rome and among them was Bishop

Lozinski of Minsk and Father Vincent Taskunas from Vilnius. Bishop Matulaitis participated in the Mass offered by the Pope and attended the audience the Pope granted this group. He wanted to do this because he was anxious to demonstrate his good will to the Poles. What he endured in Vilnius was not their doing, but had been the work of political parties.

On August 21 he left the Resurrectionists and stayed with the Benedictines at the Basilica of St. Paul. He made a ten-day retreat for which he felt a sore need. The rest and the manifold graces of the retreat brought calm to his soul. Among the resolutions he recorded in his journal, this is found: "To pray very much for those from whom I have experienced any evil." His September 3, 1925 letter to Father Bucys in Kaunas reads:

> My dear Francis: When I returned from my retreat I found your lengthy letter. I am disappointed that you are not coming. I am pleased that Father Dvaranauskas is arriving, but I shall hardly be able to accomplish as much with his help as I would with yours as Vicar General. I have neither the means nor place to receive visitors properly. I live among strangers as though I were an ordinary student. After the retreat I have been studying Italian from morning to night. It would have been so nice to visit again the land of my birth and to see all of you. Here in Rome I am still unfamiliar with the way of the life and would appreciate the help of someone with enough knowledge of the language and procedures in making necessary contacts. I feel it is improper for a bishop to blunder about everywhere by himself.
>
> Getting established here is not as easy as I thought. The Holy Father has something in mind for us but I am not sure whether or not this will be soon. He suggested that I consult with the Urban Vicar, but this Cardinal will return only at the end of October. Even to rent a house is almost impossible until the conclusion of the Holy Year.

On October 16, 1925 he writes to Father Bucys again:

> Two days ago the Osservatore Romano contained an article with news from Lithuania. It writes in praise of Canon Reinys and mentions the pilgrimage to Rome led by Canon Vincent Jarulaitis. It gives us hope that when Canon Reinys becomes Foreign Minister the relations between Lithuania and the Holy See will be

restored. It is clearly indicated that now is the time to approach the Holy See and enter into negotiations for a Concordat. I pass this on as news. You might confer about this with Canon Reinys, Canon Staugaitis, and also with the Lithuanian bishops. With the Christian Democrats in power and with priests in the cabinet of the Government, it would be unfortunate for Lithuania to remain at odds with the Holy See.

Please extend my best wishes to Canon Reinys. He will need much strength of will for he will be opposed by the enemies of the Church. But if he succeeds in reconciling matters, his accomplishments will be great. In my opinion this is the time to start negotiations; there is no purpose in waiting. There are endless difficulties, but these are man-made and can be remedied by man. If I can be of any assistance, I shall be most happy to try to restore good relations.

It would be interesting to speculate if the Bishop made this last remark just out of apostolic zeal or whether he had some premonition that he would be personally involved.

Ambassador Skrzynski was not in when Bishop Matulaitis went to the embassy on the first occasion. His visit on October 25 is described in his letter of November 9 to Father Bucys:

The first topic of our conversation was my resignation from Vilnius. The Ambassador said that the Holy Father must have been pleased and grateful that I resigned. I replied that I do not know if the Holy Father had much reason to be happy and that I could only tell him that the Holy Father agreed that it was impossible for me to remain in Vilnius. I continued that his government was already prepared to veto my elevation to the archbishopric, while the Nationalist Party in support of the government, was already preparing political tricks. In the beginning it seemed that the Ambassador wanted to explain that the Polish government had nothing to do with this.

I asked: 'How can this be? Isn't it a fact that Mr. Grabski of the Ministry for Religion and Education openly told the members of the Nationalist Party in Vilnius that in no way would the government agree to my becoming Archbishop and remaining in Vilnius; that according to the Concordat it would exercise its veto on political grounds? He had made the same statement more than once in Warsaw, as I have learned from reliable sources. This is clearly the position of the government since it even made a formal request of the Holy See that I be transferred to Czestochowa.

Bishop Przezdziecki had also asked me if I would not agree to go to Czestochowa. Naturally, I firmly refused. I took up this matter with His Excellency the Nuncio. It was then that I told him that if I was not fit to govern Vilnius because it was a totally Polish diocese, how could I do so in Czestochowa, which was no less Polish than Vilnius. Furthermore, after the Poles had denounced me and ruined my reputation, how could I regain it in Czestochowa? It is logical that I would be suspect even there and kept from doing my work as I should.'

Skrzynski saw that I had stated the case exactly and conceded that the Polish government would not have agreed that I remain in Vilnius, but also stated that it had no objections that I be transferred elsewhere on the premise that I would be satisfied with Czestochowa because of my great devotion to Mary. Anywhere else in the Republic except for Vilnius and the disputed borderlands would have been acceptable.

Then he paid me many compliments and expressed regret that I left Poland, that the Polish episcopate lost such a good man, etc., that the political parties and the press had been so vociferous that the government could not ignore them. He admitted that as the representative here for three years he had received many complaints, but was never given any facts to substantiate them as he had requested.

From this conversation it was again clear to me that I could not have remained in Vilnius. There is no question that the government would have vetoed it. The Apostolic See would have found itself in an embarrassing position and would have had to back down. It would be improper for a bishop of the Church to place the Pope in such an unhappy position. In any case I would still have had to move from Vilnius. I cannot see where Lithuania and its government would have benefited. It would have added just another item of contention with the Poles.

When I called on Cardinal De Lai, he told me that my resignation was an unpleasant necessity, but unavoidable, and he commended me for taking the right step.

The representatives of the Polish government are still dissatisfied that I have taken up residence in Rome. I really don't know what they have to fear. I hear from some Poles that they would prefer that I move elsewhere. The Ambassador, in speaking well of me now, even mentioned that it would have been well for me to have taken a bishopric in Lithuania where Poles are being persecuted...

I mention these things because it seems there are rumors that I might be given an archbishopric in Lithuania. If that should happen, Canon Staugaitis writes in his letter, the Lithuanian

> government would deny me a visa. That would make for a new scandal! The Lithuanian government can rest easy. There is no reason they should worry about me. I have always tried to avoid politics and I am still wary of it. If God would only even once grant that I could be free of that maelstrom.

According to the testimony of Father Casimir Gecys, a priest of the Vilnius diocese, Bishop Matulaitis arrived in Vilnius full of energy and unlined in countenance, but he left exhausted, bowed down, and gray-haired.

* * *

The basic and primary concern of Bishop Matulaitis in Rome was the Marian Congregation. In his very first letter to Father Bucys in Kaunas he wrote on August 6:

> I would like to establish the "Collegium Marianum" by autumn of this year. There would be two Polish candidates, one White Russian, and one Russian. The Marians in America would like to send subdeacon Maciulionis. The education and training of our men is most difficult in Poland. Perhaps you could send somebody from Lithuania. I would like to know what kind of quarters we would need.

His own permanent residence was as yet unsettled. At first he resided with the Resurrectionists, then the Benedictines, and after his retreat, with the Franciscans at Lungotevere Farnesina 40. He stayed here for a longer time and kept searching for a building to rent for the Marian center and house of studies. Before making a final decision he had to wait for the proper officials to return from vacation. In a letter to his former Chancellor he wrote: "I am like one of the birds of the air, looking for a place to roost. I feel closer to God."

He wanted to live in the quiet and obscurity of a monastery, but even this was denied him. On September 1, 1925, Pope Pius XI proclaimed him Titular Archbishop of Aduli in recognition of his work in Vilnius.

* * *

After World War I the Marian Congregation had expanded considerably. Along with the central monastery in Mariampole, the Marian Fathers had a house in Kaunas. They grew stronger in numbers in America. In Poland they were established in Bielany, Warsaw, and its suburb, Praga. In 1920, a monastery was founded in Skorzec and Rasna. The White Russian Marians had a house in Druja as of 1923, and a house in Vilani, Latvia was established in 1924. Their Superior General, while in Vilnius, had been able to make personal visits to a few of the monasteries in Poland, but his contact with the others was only by mail. It was understandable, therefore, that when the Bishop took residence in Rome, he was anxious to establish the Generalate there. This was the subject of a long letter (October 27, 1925) to Vicar General Bucys in Kaunas. In answer to some questions about construction work going on in Mariampole he wrote:

> I agree that all the work you propose is necessary, but I am afraid that we will get into so much debt there that we won't be able to take care of projects necessary elsewhere. As much as you can, hold up on some of the building. I would ask you to remember the interests of the whole order and the generalate. As the Congregation grows, it is necessary that a well-equipped and adequate central house be established. You will see that this will be of great benefit to all our branches and their institutions. A modest investment in a Center will bear fruit a hundredfold. So, as you worry about your local problems, please do not forget the need here. Once we somehow get established here, the upkeep will not be exorbitant. It is the initial investment that is hard. I trust in the Providence of God and the patronage of the Blessed Virgin.

Similar letters about the Marian Center were written to Father Warszawski in Bielany. His letter of December 3, 1925 to Bucys reads:

> My dear Francis: I was surprised and even dismayed by your last letter. I always advised you to shun episcopal honors, and now you are recommending me for an archbishopric. Remember that in making our vows we promised also not to seek honors or high positions. It is true that our duty is to serve the Church with all our might, but to do it as religious. Our vocation is not to

shepherd the Church, but to serve the shepherds. Our life does not concern ecclesial policy, but only the fostering of Christ's spirit.

There are enough competent priests in Lithuania and it should not be hard to find one suitable for the archbishopric. You will not easily find someone to do my work for our life as religious, i.e. writing and refining rules and instructions. Thus far I cannot find one among our own to do this. With due modesty I say that I have devoted much of my time and study to make this a specialty. Furthermore, in remaining in Rome, I shall be able to be of more service to the Church in Lithuania. If the politicians in Lithuania are seeking the best interests of the country, they should do all they can that I remain here in Rome to work in peace.

Just recently the Vatican proposed that I go to Lithuania for a time as Apostolic Visitator. I agreed and, if I can get a Lithuanian visa, I shall go. I feel that with God's help it will be beneficial to the Church and the Congregation. Please say nothing of this to anyone.

This proposal by the Vatican did not materialize out of thin air. In an earlier letter of October 16, 1925 to Father Bucys, Archbishop Matulaitis recommended that he consult with the bishops, the prominent clergymen and lay-people on how to re-establish ties between Lithuania and the Holy See. The result of this was a conference of the bishops and more prominent priests in Upper Panemune on October 29, where it was decided that more dioceses were needed for Lithuania. The vast Samogitian diocese had become too cumbersome. Its division would make possible an independent archiepiscopal province in Lithuania. A petition of this nature was sent to the Apostolic See on November 2. The Vatican acted favorably, and on December 7, Archbishop Matulaitis was appointed Apostolic Visitator to Lithuania.

On that very day the Visitator notified Father Bucys that he would leave Rome for Lithuania on December 9 or 10. He planned to stay in the monastery in Kaunas and asked that he be spared all unnecessary receptions.

Chapter 12

The Crowning Year and Consummation

Before he left for Lithuania as Apostolic Visitator, Archbishop Matulaitis had a long conversation on December 9, 1925 with the Holy Father in which they covered the essential aspects of that historic mission and he received the Pope's blessing. He left the project of establishing the Marian Generalate to Father Casimir Reklaitis and departed for Lithuania. Throughout the journey he weighed various contingencies but did not feel any apprehension because the Golgotha he had endured in Vilnius had prepared him to deal adequately with any situation. In letters to his closer friends he admitted that his eyes filled with tears as he neared his native land.

He reached Kaunas at noon on December 13. Representatives of the Lithuanian Government, clergy, and Catholic organizations greeted the distinguished guest at the railroad station with the customary ceremonies of welcome.

The Visitator was well aware of the boiling atmosphere in Lithuania, made turbid not only by the patriots, but also by socialists and anti-religionists of every coloration, who found this a good opportunity to vent their spleen on the Pope for having "delivered" Vilnius, the historic Capital of Lithuania, to the Poles. For this reason Archbishop Matulaitis, sometimes even called a Pole, had to weigh carefully every word he spoke; but he never lost his composure although at times his heart was in turmoil.

Even though official missions took most of his time, he

still found a spare moment for writing letters. These touched mainly on matters concerning the Marian Congregation and the situation in Lithuania. His first letter from Kaunas, a very short one, was sent to Father Reklaitis in Rome on December 16:

> My dear brother: I arrived safely and found much work to do. I am getting the feel of things and with God's help I may be able to do some good. A small group of Lithuanian pilgrims, with Bishop Skvireckas, is preparing to travel to Rome... Arrange for a place for them to stay. I shall give you more details later. My hearty greetings to all. + Archbishop George.

The next letter (December 18, 1925), much longer and written in haste, largely about matters of the Marian Congregation, also announces that the pilgrims are leaving for Rome and even suggests places where they might stay:

> I am involved in a deluge of work, night and day. There will be many difficulties. I found a lamentable situation here. I trust God will help me resolve the many problems. I have completed the official visits and now I am getting acquainted with the lay of the land. I have done what was possible and took care of what could not be postponed... Possibly this Sunday I shall be able to go to Mariampole.

In his letter of December 22, 1925, to his close friend and former co-worker, Canon Chalecki, the Archbishop describes vividly his situation and feelings as Apostolic Visitator:

> My dear Father Lucian: I am sending you the documents concerning Trinapolis and thank you for your greetings. I will not be able to send holiday greetings from here, so I ask you to greet Bishop Michalkevicius, Canon Viskantas, the whole Chapter, our colleagues in the Chancery, and the Bernardine nuns. I shall commend Vilnius and the Archdiocese to the love of the Infant Jesus.
>
> I did not expect to find myself here. The Holy Father appointed me Apostolic Visitator to Lithuania and directed that I go there immediately. I came just in time. It was certainly an act of Divine Providence. In Vilnius I had some hard hours and at times I imagined that I was besieged by diabolical forces, but here I have

Marian Monastery at Kaunas where Archbishop George as Apostolic Visitator lived 1925-1927

> encountered Lucifer himself. I work day and night, pray, and mortify myself.
>
> I include greetings now on your Patronal feast day because I doubt that I shall be able to write soon. The Lord certainly leads me along strange paths. May His Name be praised! I became a priest to be consumed by suffering and love. Please think of me occasionally; or rather, my mission, and pray very hard... Somehow, I feel sad and find it hard to hold back my tears. Affectionately, George.

After several days in Lithuania, Archbishop Matulaitis wrote on December 17 to Cardinal Gasparri about what he had already done and gave his first impressions. He had striven, first of all, to explain to the populace that his mission was in reality a great favor granted the Lithuanian nation by the Holy Father; that good Catholics, priests and laypeople, should consider his arrival as a mark of concern for the Church.

To him the condition of the Church in all aspects was deplorable. It was most painful that in all the commotion against the Pope some of the provocateurs were priests in the government and in the ruling party. This behavior on the part of some priests misled the people of good will who were as if paralyzed, confused and with no reaction. These priests were trying everything possible to block relations with the Holy See which, they say, upholds the Poles.

The Archbishop reports there are a few who left the priesthood, or are about to leave, having cast off not only their clerical garb but also their moral principles. Even though they are lacking in expertise in political and state affairs, they are being appointed to responsible positions in government.

It seemed to the Visitator that some insidious force was trying to destroy the Church and separate the Lithuanians from the Holy See. On the other hand, the Church hierarchy was doing nothing to restrain these hot-headed priests and Catholic laity, and was not rising up to defend the Pope from slanderous accusations. The Catholics are leaderless and the clergy without discipline. It seemed as though the Church was without guidance.

From the very first day of his arrival, the Visitator began his apostolate. Wherever he could, he called on prominent State officials, laymen, clergy, Catholics and non-Catholics. He tried to show that the opposition to the Holy See was the result of unfounded rumors and fabrications.

He had special talks with priest politicians and tried to explain his mission so they would understand the Holy See's good intentions to put the affairs of the Church in order. However, some of them were strongly opposed, especially now that Congressional elections were imminent. They were afraid that in siding with the Pope they would lose votes among the electorate. Then the Archbishop clearly told them that it was they who were directly responsible for the sad state of Church affairs in Lithuania.

A meeting of the leaders of all Catholic groups was called on December 15. It was attended by the Prime Minister, the Foreign Affairs Minister, and the President of the Parliament. The Visitator explained that the situation of Catholics would improve only when the Church was well organized and good relations were cemented between the Holy See and the Lithuanian Government. His appointment as Apostolic Visitator, he kept insisting, is a gesture of good will toward Lithuania and that he, in representing the Holy See, had shown his good will and now expects the same from them. He stated that as a last resort he would appeal directly to the Catholic populace which doubtlessly would support the Holy See and the Church against the straying clergy.

After discussions and at the suggestion of the Visitator, it was decided that on the occasion of the closing of the Holy Year a Catholic delegation led by Bishop Skvireckas be sent to Rome to thank the Holy Father for appointing an Apostolic Visitator to Lithuania. There was only one priest in the assemblage who opposed this proposal. Eventually, the Visitator gained the good will of the best of the Catholic laity and clergy and their support for his mission.

As for the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Zecchini, the Visitator found a disturbing residue of vexation and indignation left among the people for the inept way he had handled matters and his mode of dealing with people. Though he was reputed to be a very devout man, he was most unsuccessful in the sphere of diplomacy.

In view of this situation, Archbishop Matulaitis openly declared that his mission had nothing to do with Archbishop Zecchini. For the best interests of the Church, he asked that the Holy See in the future deal not through Archbishop Zecchini, but either directly with him or through the Executive Secretary of the Apostolic Delegation, Msgr. Aloysius Faidutti, a man of proven competence and compassion, whom the Visitator found to be the best co-worker and adviser.

After first accomplishing what he saw as necessary among government officials and leaders in Lithuania, the Archbishop turned his attention to the actual needs of Church institutions, the clergy, and the faithful. In an attempt to neglect nothing that would enhance the glory of God and the good of the Church, he worked day and night, prayed much, and fasted.

* * *

The three most important goals of the Visitator's mission were these: to establish an ecclesiastical province in Lithuania, to renew relations with the Holy See, and to draw up a Concordat. His basic task was to concretize these projects, gain the approval of the Government, and the confirmation of the Holy See.

The province was to include the entire territory of Lithuania, excepting the areas occupied by the Poles. Formidable obstacles appeared immediately. The foremost was the adverse attitude of the Lithuanian Government. It knew that at this time the Pope could not assign the Vilnius diocese to Lithuania, so it reasoned it could not sign a document whereby the traditional and historical Capital would find itself outside the boundaries of the country. Further, the Government thought the ordering of ecclesial matters should be postponed until after the elections.

Archbishop Matulaitis was an extremely practical man. From his experiences with parliamentary elections in other countries he had learned that a party in the driver's seat for a longer time loses at times merely because the electorate wants a change and votes contrary to the party's will. Therefore, the Visitator hurried to finalize the drafting of diocesan boundaries while the present regime was still in power. It was hard for him to come to an agreement on this point even with the right wing of the Government which did not always have solidarity and whose cabinet members changed frequently. The President of the Republic, Alexander Stulginskis, was a good

Catholic, respected even by his political opponents, but his authority was limited by the Constitution.

There were also territorial difficulties. Independent Lithuania encompassed sections of the Vilnius, Seinai, and Ermland dioceses, whose seats of civil government were outside the borders of the Republic. The Klaipeda region gave the Visitator the most trouble.

The Visitator thoroughly examined all ecclesiastical, juridical, political, national, and pastoral aspects. He sent a well-documented report to the Holy See with the reminder that Klaipeda legitimately belongs to the Lithuanian Republic and suggested the area in question, removed from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Ermland, be made an Apostolic Vicariate to be administered by the Bishop of Telsiai as the Holy See's delegate.

When the diverse obstacles had been hurdled and clarified, the Visitator appointed a special commission to set the diocesan areas and boundaries. He was assisted by the bishops, the more prominent clergy, and the adviser to the Delegation of the Holy See, Msgr. Faidutti. Kaunas would be the metropolitan see of the province, with four suffragan dioceses.

The selection of candidates for the bishoprics was a most important and delicate task for the Visitator. The same stipulations had to be applied to this matter as were required in the creation of the church province, namely approval of the government and confirmation by the Holy See. There was no lack of gifted and fitting candidates among the Lithuanian clergy.

The plan for the ecclesiastical province of Lithuania and the selection of bishops was completed on February 15, 1926 and was approved that very day by the Conference of Bishops. On February 20, the Visitator acquainted the heads of government, President Stulginskis, Prime Minister Dr. Leon Bistras, and the Foreign Affairs Minister Msgr. Reinys, with the finalized plans. There was some difference of opinion on a few details, but in essence the projects were acceptable.

* * *

When all the documents had been prepared on the Church Province of Lithuania, the Visitator hurried off to Rome to present them to the Holy See for confirmation. He arrived in Rome on March 6, 1926 and on March 8 met with the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri. He stressed the importance of the early approval because of upcoming parliamentary elections in Lithuania, whose results may not favor the Catholics. Hence, he asked that the establishment of the province and the appointment of the bishops take place while Catholics still held the stronger hand in Lithuania's government.

The Holy Father received the Visitator in private audience on March 13, and thanked him for the mission so well accomplished. As a sign of his gratitude, the Pope presented Archbishop Matulaitis with a gold medal issued on the occasion of the canonization of St. Therese of the Child Jesus.

The work progressed briskly through Vatican channels. Whatever hitches were encountered were quickly ironed out and the Papal Bull "Lituanorum Gente," establishing the Lithuanian Ecclesiastical Province, was ready. The date for its promulgation was chosen by Pope Pius XI himself, Easter, April 4, 1926, the Feast of Christ's Resurrection. On the following day the Pope appointed all the bishops for Lithuania as proposed.

An exuberant Visitator wrote on April 6 to Archbishop Skvireckas, informing him that the Bull was to be printed in the Acta Apostolicae Sedis. It was an occasion of local amazement that a matter of such historic significance was accomplished in so short a time. This was, no doubt, due to the special love and benevolence the Pope wanted to show Lithuania. In ending his letter, the Visitator expressed the hope that Lithuania and its government will show proper appreciation by sending a telegram of thanks to the Pope. He asked that Skvireckas use his influence that this be done.

Solemnities for the erection of Lithuania's Ecclesiastical Province at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Kaunas on May 13, 1926. (Painting by Janulis)

On April 10 he wrote again to Archbishop Skvireckas that the Papal Bulls of episcopal appointment would be ready by April 16 and that the designated bishops should begin preparations for their consecration. He asked that the proclamation of the Bull of Establishment be made as impressive as possible in the Cathedral of Kaunas, and he suggested that a seminar be arranged where the past history of the bishoprics of Lithuania be properly expounded by some of the professors of the University. He wrote also that he and Bishop Karevicius will have an audience with the Pope on April 12. Because Archbishop Matulaitis was preparing to go to the International Eucharistic Congress in Chicago, he was anxious that all the most important matters be taken care of before his departure.

The work of the establishment of the province was done. Now it was time to inaugurate the new leaders appointed by the successor of St. Peter, Pope Pius XI. The title and authority of bishop are conferred in the solemn ceremonies of Episcopal Consecration. Separate ceremonies for the four bishops took place in the Archdiocesan Cathedral of Kaunas on April 25, May 1, May 2, and May 16.

The installation in their several cathedrals took place somewhat later. The crowning event was the installation of Archbishop Joseph Skvireckas as Metropolitan in the cathedral of Kaunas on May 13, the Feast of the Ascension. The ceremonies were attended by President Stulginskis, the Cabinet, Members of Parliament, representatives of other nations, institutions of higher learning, many organizations, individual dignitaries, and a huge crowd of the faithful.

To begin the ceremonies, the Papal Bull "Lituanorum Gente" (For the Nation of Lithuania), was read, along with the executive decree officially constituting the Ecclesial Province of Lithuania. The preacher was the Visitator, Archbishop Matulaitis, who elucidated the more important points of its constitution, laying stress on the meaning of a

province in the religious and national life of the country in the future. He reminded his audience eloquently of the mutual benefits when the Catholics of a nation enjoy unity with the Holy See.

With these ceremonies, the first phase of the Visitator's mission was accomplished. He had to postpone the latter phases, the cementing of relations between Lithuania and the Holy See and drawing up a Concordat, because of his imminent journey to the United States to take part in the XXVIII International Eucharistic Congress in Chicago.

* * *

Just when George Matulaitis felt a vocation to monastic life is hard to determine. Some inkling can be gained from his appeal to the Holy See for permission to take religious vows without a novitiate in renewing the Marian Congregation. There he states that for many years he had been attracted to this life and had long been trying to lead his priestly life according to monastic rules and practices. "I feel, before God, that I understand sufficiently the ordered life and fixed rules of a religious order, and especially of the Marians."

When the Czarist Government abolished in 1864 practically all Catholic religious orders of men and women, secret monasteries were founded in Poland and the neighboring countries. A Capuchin, Father Honoratus, was most active in this work. In the period from 1874 to 1895, he founded about twenty secret religious orders, eighteen for women and two for men. He wrote their constitutions and guided their first steps. Each one had some specific mission, especially in the social field: to care for and educate the poor, the orphans, and the laboring classes. These congregations spread quickly throughout Poland, Russia, Lithuania (Vilnius and Seinai), and Latvia.

These activities were known to Father Matulaitis when he studied at the Institute in St. Petersburg and when he taught at Kielce Seminary, but he came in personal contact

with the founder only when he had completed his studies in Switzerland. In 1904, seeking a more perfect spiritual life, he joined the "Association of Mary for Secular Priests" which Father Honoratus had founded in 1892. For a time Father Matulaitis headed the Warsaw group of this Association.

As Father Honoratus grew to know Father Matulaitis, he saw that this learned priest was touched by the Spirit of God, that he knew well the fundamentals of religious life and Christian perfection, and that he lived in that spirit. In him Father Honoratus found an able ally. Restricted as he was to the Nowe Miasto monastery, he knew that by himself it was impossible to supervise the orders he had founded. Hence, he advised the superiors and members of women's religious orders to consult Father Matulaitis on more important matters. He also delegated Father Matulaitis to make visitations in the communities and, when necessary, even to change the superiors.

The religious orders founded by Father Honoratus needed help of another kind. Pope Leo XIII issued his decree "Conditae a Christo" on December 8, 1900, approving religious institutes of simple vows. The Roman Congregation for Bishops and Religious promulgated in 1901 its "Normae" on the procedures for establishing these orders and how the already established orders should be approved. It added a schema on how the individual orders were to draw up their rules.

As an expert in structuring the rules of religious life, Father Matulaitis helped many of them to adapt to the 1901 norms. When in 1917 the New Code of Canon Law was issued, all religious orders were required to adapt the juridical statutes of their constitutions to the new Code. This gave Father Matulaitis more work because he had to revise the statutes he had already drawn up for the Marians to comply with the Code. Apart from this, he was always happy and eager to be of assistance to other religious orders, because their work was closest to his heart.

He often reminded his Marians that their first duty was to work with men and youngsters. Simultaneously, he prized highly the apostolate for women. He saw in them the capacity for a greater faith, devotion, dedication, and perseverance. In his sociology courses in St. Petersburg on the condition of womanhood, he endorsed the equal but separate status of woman to man, outside the unique tasks God gave to women.

Personally he had the greatest respect and gratitude for women because of their goodness and compassion when he most needed it. These he received first of all from his mother and after her death his elder sister Emily. Later, the Countess Plater and her nuns gave him refuge in Warsaw from 1904 to 1907, and nursed him back to health. In formulating the constitutions and instructions for women's orders, he tried to draw them out of their outdated shells of enclosure, away from the class distinctions among members and from the intransigence about religious habits.

Perhaps Father Matulaitis gave the greatest amount of help to the nuns of the Servants of the Sacred Heart who were so kind to him in his early priesthood. In 1904 he revised their statutes which were approved by the Holy See on December 21, 1909. These nuns were very grateful and provided him with food and the necessary furniture when he became Bishop of war-ravaged Vilnius.

In a report to the Holy See made in 1925, the General Superior of the Order wrote: "Divine Providence aided the efforts of the founders by sending us the zealous, learned and deeply spiritual Father Matulaitis. At his urging, Mother Maria Chudzinska convened the first Chapter. He reviewed our constitution and adapted it to the 1901 Norms and obtained for us the approbation of the Holy See."

Besides the extensive work for this community, he helped revise and gain approbation for other religious women's congregations: The Servants of Jesus, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Consolers of the Sacred Heart, Sisters of the Holy Name, and others.

From his correspondence in 1923 with the superior of the Sisters of the Holy Name (founded in 1887), it is evident that he was revising their statutes. These, written by Bishop Matulaitis, were approved in 1927 and the Sisters received a "decretum laudis" from the Holy See, the first step to Pontifical rights.

Early during his stay in Vilnius (1919), he adapted the statutes of the Sons of the Sorrowful Mother (Dolorists), to the new Code. This men's order, founded in 1894, received approbation of its rules in 1924.

Father Matulaitis rendered much service to the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Casimir, founded in the United States in 1907 by Father Anthony Staniukynas (1865-1918). Its basic goal was to prepare teachers for Lithuanian parochial schools. When Father Matulaitis came to America in 1913, the generalate for these Sisters was in Chicago. At the chaplaincy on their property he settled the first Marians in America. During the time that he was with them, he was very helpful to the Sisters. He conducted a retreat, gave them spiritual conferences and re-wrote their statutes according to the 1901 Norms. Then he adapted the rules in 1924 to the Code of 1917. He was working to obtain Pontifical rights for this congregation when his early death put an end to this plan.

Twice he wrote the statutes for his own Marian Congregation, first in 1910 to conform with the "Normae" of 1901; then in 1924 as Bishop of Vilnius he revised them according to the new Code of Canon Law. He sent these to all Marians, asking for suggestions and/or corrections. These statutes were finally approved by the Holy See on January 27, 1930. Father Aleksy Petrani, professor at the Catholic University in Lublin and an expert on religious constitutions, stated that of the religious order statutes known to him, those written by Father Matulaitis were the most perfect.

After the renewal of the Marian Order and in the process of preparing future workers for the Church in Poland and Lithuania (1911 to 1914), Father Matulaitis

planned fo found a secret congregation of women in Lithuania. The war of 1914-1918 halted for a time the establishment of this congregation.

This work was resumed in the spring of 1918 when Father Matulaitis had returned to Lithuania. He wrote the constitution for the community he was founding according to the most recent norms and presented it to Bishop Karosas, who gave his approval on October 15, 1918. As founder he gave it its name: The Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Mary for the Poor.

Father Matulaitis incorporated in this order his ideals for the life of women religious: deep spirituality, active apostolate, and a willingness to go and work wherever the spirit of Christ could be implanted. Aside from their common purpose, the glory of God and personal sanctification, the nuns were to staff and conduct grammar schools, kindergartens, nurseries, institutes of learning for girls, hospitals, homes for the aged, orphanages, publishing facilities for books and newspapers, and to be involved in Catholic Action.

In his survey of the Vilnius diocese, Bishop Matulaitis found a large number of White Russian Catholics. Their spiritual needs and religious welfare were of great concern to him. He and the White Russian clergy saw that nuns of White Russian background could supply urgently needed help and assistance.

Bishop Matulaitis decided to form a religious congregation of women in Druja. The initial organizing process was begun in 1923. After obtaining approval of the Holy See in 1924, he formally established them as the Congregation of Sister Servants of Jesus in the Eucharist. Their scope included the broad area of social and welfare work, especially of catechizing children, adults, and an apostolate among Orthodox White Russians. Their first Spiritual Director was the Bishop himself.

Archbishop Matulaitis as Apostolic Visitator considered the state of the religious orders in Lithuania of prime importance, especially the women's communities. In

1926 there were five communities of women religious: Benedictines in Kaunas, Sisters of St. Catherine in Krakes, Sisters of St. Casimir in Pazaislis and Kaunas, Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Kaunas and elsewhere, and the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, based in Mariampole and widely spread throughout Lithuania. The Visitator gave them special conferences and took care of some juridical matters for them.

His most important task was the reform of the Benedictine nuns in Kaunas. In 1863 they had been left by Czarist Russia to die out through attrition. The Benedictines were able to circumvent Russian intentions by the subterfuge of handing down the names of their deceased members to new candidates.

In the early 1920's these Sisters found it difficult to live up to their rule of cloisture and the contemplative life.

After a complete investigation and with the approval of the Holy See, the Visitator made radical reforms. He adapted to them the statutes of the American Sisters of St. Scholastica. The order became a more open apostolic sisterhood and the community soon began to grow.

* * *

Father Matulaitis made his first trip to America in 1913 when he accompanied two pioneer Marians, Fathers Felix Kudirka and Julian Kazakas, from Switzerland to establish the first center of Lithuanian Marians overseas.

His second journey took place after thirteen years. Its purpose was to see for himself how the Marians had progressed and to confirm them in their apostolic work. He had long wanted to go, but was detained by the pressures of his duties. The personal invitation from Cardinal George Mundelein (1872-1939), Archbishop of Chicago, to attend the XXVIII International Eucharistic Congress, was the needed incentive to make this trip.

This invitation was particularly appreciated because Cardinal Mundelein was well-intentioned toward

Lithuanians from the earliest days of his priesthood as pastor of Queen of Angels Lithuanian parish in Brooklyn. Later as Archbishop of Chicago, he continued his kindness to the Lithuanians by his special solicitude for the Sisters of St. Casimir and the Marians.

Archbishop Matulaitis, with Father Bucys as traveling companion, left Lithuania at the end of May. They went by train from Kaunas to Paris and then to Cherbourg. On June 1st they sailed on the American liner "Leviathan," which arrived in New York City on June 7, and were met by a large reception committee.

The guests were put up at the famous Waldorf Astoria hotel where that same evening a huge reception was held with about 400 in attendance. Among others were the Ambassador to Washington, Casimir Bizauskas, Consul Dr. Julius Bielskis, many priests and prominent laypeople. Msgr. Lavelle welcomed the guest on behalf of Cardinal Patrick Hayes, Archbishop of New York.

In his address, Archbishop Matulaitis expressed thanks for the festive reception. He also praised the Lithuanian emigres for their many accomplishments in America and for their aid to their now independent homeland. Laced throughout his talk were references to the meaning and importance of religion, Christian moral principles, justice, industriousness, patriotism, and the respect owed each human being.

After a few days in Washington, the Archbishop left on June 11 by train for Chicago, a "Lithuanian" city with 13 Lithuanian parishes, the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Casimir and the Marian center. A special reception committee met him at the railroad station, and in a large entourage he was taken to the Marian monastery near Our Lady of Vilna church. At eleven o'clock that morning, he celebrated Mass and gave a short sermon. The crowd of people in the church and the street was unusually large even though it was a Friday.

There was little rest for the guest. That evening he was tendered a reception banquet in the convent

Archbishop George Matulaitis in America 1926

auditorium of the Sisters of St. Casimir. At the conclusion of the meal, the welcoming speeches began. The table of honor was long, but the list of speakers was longer. The last to speak was Archbishop Matulaitis.

Cicero, Illinois is a suburb west of Chicago and adjacent to it. Here Lithuanian immigrants started to settle at the end of the 19th century. In 1911, Father Anthony Ezerskis (1880-1968), built a two-story brick building which housed the parish church and the school. In a comparatively short time the number of parishioners grew to the point where they started to plan a more spacious and church-like building with a tower and the features commonly

Archbishop George at Our Lady of Vilna parish, Chicago

associated with a House of God. Father Jerome Vaiciunas the pastor, kept the enthusiasm alive and the parishioners responded with generous support. In the spring of 1926 the church was nearing completion and Father Vaiciunas was overjoyed when he heard that Archbishop Matulaitis was coming to America and that the church could be dedicated by a Lithuanian Archbishop.

The dedication ceremonies took place on the church's Patronal Feast Day, St. Anthony, Sunday, June 13th.

The Archbishop blessed the church, offered the first pontifical Mass, preached a sermon fitting the occasion, and gave the Apostolic Blessing. The ceremonies were lengthy.

The day's schedule was not yet finished for the Archbishop. At 5:00 p.m. he visited Providence of God church where Father Albavicius was pastor. In a stirring sermon he expressed his joy at the devotion of the people and conducted Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Between June 14 and 19, he visited Lithuanian parishes in Chicago and was met by enthusiastic crowds everywhere. Some might have come just out of curiosity to see what a Lithuanian Archbishop looked like, but left very much impressed by the sincerity of his faith-filled words and pleasing personality.

As the days of the Eucharistic Congress approached, the Archbishop suspended his visits to other Lithuanian parishes. An announcement was made in the press that he would visit parishes where the pastors, with the permission of their Ordinaries, would invite him. The invitations had to be made before July 4.

* * *

This Eucharistic Congress was notable that for the first time in the history of these International Congresses the Lithuanians participated as an organized national body with a special section reserved for them alongside other nations.

Preparations for the Congress were started early and covered many details. When news reached Chicago that the Papal Legate, Cardinal John Bonzano, was arriving on June 17, people from all parts of the city converged on the Illinois Central station to greet him. Factory whistles sounded the arrival of a special train from New York. The cars of the train, painted a cardinal red, slowly entered the station. The Papal Legate and his entourage were met by the host, Cardinal Mundelein. Archbishop Matulaitis and Father Bucys were among the special welcoming committee.

Eleven Cardinals, about 40 Archbishops, more than 260 Bishops, and throngs of priests, nuns, and laypeople took part in the Eucharistic Congress.

Instructions were given that on the opening, June 20th, in all the churches of the diocese Masses would be celebrated continuously on the halfhour from five o'clock and throughout the morning, and that a bishop should celebrate one of the Masses in every parish. Archbishop Matulaitis celebrated his Mass in Our Lady of Vilna church.

Each national group had its separate section and a special site for its meetings during the three days. The 124th Field Artillery Armory, accommodating 10,000 people, was reserved for the Lithuanian section of the Congress. The meeting of the Lithuanian group was scheduled for 3:00 p.m.

Archbishop Matulaitis together with Bishop Hugo Boyle of Pittsburgh made their entrance. Bishop Boyle, apologizing for not knowing Lithuanian, praised the Lithuanian Catholics in his diocese, wished all well, and left.

Archbishop Matulaitis thanked the assembly for its warm reception. He mentioned that he was authorized to represent all the bishops in Lithuania and the Center for Catholic Action. In his talk he assured the audience that Lithuania was happy with her sons and daughters in America who held so staunchly to the faith of their fathers, prized their native language, did so much to aid their

fatherland, and were such good citizens of their adopted land. Then he spoke of the Blessed Sacrament which strengthens their spiritual life and brings so many blessings to the life of man.

The Our Lady of Vilna parish church was full that evening when the Archbishop presided at Solemn Vespers. Father Bucys preached about the public worship of the Blessed Sacrament and the significance of Eucharistic Congresses. Then the Archbishop gave Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Archbishop Matulaitis participated in all the sessions and solemn processions of the Congress.

* * *

On July 19, 1913, Father Matulaitis brought to America from Switzerland two priests who had just recently completed their novitiate in the Marian Congregation and settled them in Chicago. When he returned to America 13 years later, his family here had grown to 38 members, with eight priests among them.

Aboard ship on his way to the Eucharistic Congress he was impatient to see his Marian confreres. He could not escape the thought that the Congress was the occasion for a home-coming and he tried to envision how better the members of the Congregation could expand their apostolate and cultivate more intensely the fields they were laboring in.

When he arrived in Chicago he stayed at the monastery close to the editorial offices and printing plant of the "Draugas" (Lithuanian Catholic Daily), and next to Our Lady of Vilna church which the Marians staffed. In 1922-23, the Marians acquired acres of fertile and hilly land southwest of Chicago which they named Marian Hills. In 1924 a large brick building was erected on the site to house their novitiate and juniorate for candidates to the Congregation.

While in the United States the Archbishop's hours and days were filled with intense work. He retired late at night

and rose early, so much so, that he had little time for relaxing or socializing. There were so many who wanted to speak to him, to seek advice or direction. Then there were the delegates of societies and organizations who came with invitations to participate in their meetings or programs, and remained just to chat and enjoy his company. They had never been so near a bishop, especially one so sincerely humble and pleasant.

But his principal concern was to be informed about every detail of his Congregation's activities and their institutions, to speak to all the Marians as a group and with all individual members without exception. He wanted to determine at the grass roots level to whom and what tasks should be assigned for the welfare of the Church and the good of the nation.

Archbishop George was not only a great idealist, but also an eminently practical man. He had a deep reverence for every human being, seeing in all the soul created by God which was to be led to salvation. The poor and the deprived were especially close to his heart, as can be seen from his intense interest in the social apostolate. He sought to acquire as vast a knowledge as possible about the Lithuanians in America so that in his diligently prepared speeches and sermons he could share with them not only the eternal truths but also practical suggestions on their activities and way of life.

He was happy with the labors of the Marians in the United States, and his practical mind saw that the need of an autonomous Marian province was at hand. This was fully merited by the Marian Fathers who were well known as missionaries, administrators of parishes, spiritual directors for the Sisters of St. Casimir, and for their work in the educational field and Catholic press.

According to the Marian Constitutions, a province can be constituted of three separate monasteries or houses. Using his powers as Superior General, he constituted the three houses at the Draugas printing house, Our Lady of

Vilna parish, and Marian Hills. The Province as such was canonically approved in 1930.

Emphasizing the educational field, the Superior General directed that apart from the scholasticate a junior college be founded. He laid out the program for the college so that it would meet the standards of American educational systems and the requisites for maintaining and extending Lithuanian culture. These changes and additions were not only an accolade to the Marians in America, but also a challenge for the future.

When he arrived in the United States the Archbishop was asked if he would like to visit the Lithuanian colonies and their parishes. This struck him as though he were asked whether it was necessary to turn on the lights with the sun shining.

The Marians in Chicago were flooded with invitations. The arrangements committee worked hard to plan an itinerary, keeping in mind the number of requests, the timing and distances. Most of the Lithuanian parishes were concentrated in the eastern states: southern New England, New York and New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Baltimore, the birthplace of the Catholic Church's hierarchy in the United States.

Two weeks after the Eucharistic Congress, the Archbishop prepared to leave Chicago. A farewell banquet was held July 7 in the auditorium of Our Lady of Vilna parish.

Visiting the Lithuanian parishes in the States took about two months, until August 29. In all he visited 92 parishes. Where the parishes were smaller and nearer to each other he visited two in one day. The American press gave these visits wide coverage both in lineage and photos. The Lithuanian press was somewhat remiss in this.

Ordinarily during his visits, the Archbishop celebrated a Solemn High Mass, gave a sermon, and gave his blessing. In the smaller parishes when the visits were made in the afternoon or evening, the Mass was omitted. Here and there he administered the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Whether the churches were large or small they were always filled not only with parishioners but even with the unchurched and irreligious. People of other nationalities also attended because the Archbishop's visit was outstanding not only for the Lithuanians but for all the populace.

When the church services were finished, the Archbishop did not hurry to the rectory to rest or freshen up. He mingled with the people to chat with them and greeted every one no matter of what religion. He spoke with the children, adolescents, men and women, the young and the old. For all he had the appropriate word with his winning smile. That spiritual oneness dispelled his physical fatigue and mental tensions. From appearances all these activities seemed casual and easy. Beneath the cassock his shirt was soaked in perspiration. His aching leg, in metal braces, spoke otherwise.

On July 10 he visited the small St. George's parish in Niagara Falls. Next day he stopped at the small, newly established Lithuanian parish in Rochester, New York. From there he traveled south to the steel and coal regions of Pennsylvania. The more or less 40 Lithuanian parishes were concentrated mostly around Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Shenandoah, and Pittsburgh. Then he traveled southeast through the more level and fertile countryside toward the historic city of Brotherly Love, Philadelphia.

The priests of that city's three Lithuanian parishes and many laypeople met him at the railroad station and escorted him directly to St. Andrew's church for services. He resided in St. Casimir parish rectory while in Philadelphia July 24-26.

The United States celebrated its Sesquicentennial in 1926. The festivities centered mainly in Philadelphia where the Declaration of Independence was signed. On July 26, when he had finished his parish visits in the city, the Archbishop called on the Archbishop of Philadelphia, Cardinal Dennis Dougherty, and Mayor Kendrick. The Mayor was specially pleased and gave the Archbishop a gold Sesquicentennial key.

Visiting the parishes along the thickly settled Eastern seashore took up another month. In this part of the country were concentrated centers of business and finance and the busy ocean docks which were the gateway for immigrants from many countries who sought freedom. Most of these were welcomed by the famous Statue of Liberty with its lofty torch as they sailed into busy New York harbor.

From New York he traveled north along the Atlantic seacoast toward Boston, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, where the parishioners of the many Lithuanian settlements eagerly awaited him. He visited as many as he could. The Eucharistic Congress and the Archbishop's visits did much to publicize the name of Lithuania and its people. The American press was generous in its news coverage. He left the United States on September 1, 1926. In five months he was dead.

* * *

On his return to Lithuania from the United States, Archbishop Matulaitis found a left-wing government hostile to the Church and Catholics. It did not want to give recognition to the new ecclesiastical Province nor to the assigned bishops. To official episcopal letters the government would reply that it knew nothing of such a bishop.

The leftist leaders were particularly displeased with the Archbishop's efforts at the Vatican to give formal structure to the life of the Catholics in Lithuania, e.g., the Philosophical-Theological faculties in the university, the seminaries, a common church ritual, the religious orders and their schools, an Ordinariate for army chaplains, the Catholic Action Center, etc.

Archbishop Matulaitis was in no hurry to confront the government directly or in person. He made visits to the newly erected dioceses and many of their churches, presiding at religious services and preaching, explaining the meaning and necessity of the Church Province, but making

no references to the government in power. Gradually he made contacts and negotiated with it despite difficulties caused by government representatives with an antagonistic attitude to what they imagined to be "clericalism."

The official trend was to condemn the previous administration, Catholics, the Church, the armed forces and first volunteers. Internal tensions increased day by day. In an attempt to forestall any disastrous incidents, Archbishop Matulaitis wrote a memorandum to the President, Casimir Grinius:

> Mr President: The situation of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, which we considered in our episcopal meetings of October 7 and 9 of this year, motivates us, the bishops of Lithuania, to address you, the head of state, and point out what is menacing our nation.
>
> When the Republic of Lithuania was established, we soon felt the need for the Church to be independent of non-Lithuanian Metropolitans. The Government itself in 1919 made efforts that an autonomous Church province be established and that the number of bishops be increased. Steps in this direction were repeated later.
>
> We are compelled by the circumstances of life to make a definite decision in this matter, so important to the nation and the State. The Apostolic Visitator in 1926, together with the bishops of Lithuania and with the knowledge of the Government, proposed such a project to the Holy See which confirmed it in the Papal Bull 'Lituanorum Gente' on April 4 of that same year.
>
> This document is wholly legal since the Catholic Church, autonomous in its own competency, can arrange matters according to its own laws. This right is recognized for the Church in Article 83 of the Constitution of the Republic which reads: 'The State recognizes equal rights for all existing religious bodies in Lithuania to govern themselves as their codes and statutes require. The Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church now in effect states that it is the exclusive right of the Pope to establish Church provinces, dioceses, and to appoint bishops for them.'
>
> However, after the last Parliamentary elections and with the changes in the Cabinet, the present de facto status is this: From our talks with members of the Cabinet it is now clear that the present Government refuses to recognize the established dioceses and their bishops and does not consider them as juridical persons. For the State to deprive citizens of personal rights is tantamount

to a sentence of civil death. These actions of the Government cannot be interpreted as anything but a declared war against the Church.

We do not want that war and we see it as all-destructive and a peril not only to the Church but also to our nation and to our infant Republic. We, the bishops, alone cannot stop it. We bring to your attention, Mr. President, that the total responsibility for this conflict and its disastrous effects rests on the administration now in power during your presidency. (Memorandum dated at Kaunas, October 8, 1926).

Archbishop Matulaitis did not write much in his letters about the situation in Lithuania because relations with the Government were touchy. As though seeking respite, he concentrated his attention more on the needs of the Marians, especially the Generalate in Rome. A bit more information is contained in a letter of November 22 to Father Reklaitis:

Carissime: Today we forward a bank draft in the amount of $1,000. Thank God we have found a place in Rome and will be able to get settled as we should. I do not intend to go to Rome soon because one of the Government officials said there might be deliberations about a Concordat. Of course, the Church is always in favor of peace and harmony, but we wonder if we can negotiate with the present Government and come to an agreement.

A bill was introduced in Parliament which, on passage, will turn over to the State the keeping of church records, legalize civil marriages, and grant divorces just by mutual agreement of both parties. Dissatisfaction with the present government is growing. Poor Lithuania! All these experiments for its good and all the political wrangling will destroy it.

The leftist government revoked the war-like state of emergency, lifted the censorship of the press, and freed political prisoners, most of whom were communists. They engineered an outbreak of demonstrations, marching through the streets of Kaunas with red banners flying while singing the Internationale in Russian.

Communist propaganda and party quarrels threatened the peace of the land. With a possible intrusion by the

Soviet Union, the danger of losing Lithuanian independence was seen not only by Catholic leaders, but also by university students, many of whom had been officers in the battles against the first invasion of the bolsheviks in 1918-1919. There was also danger from the socialist government, unable or unwilling to suppress the radical elements, but doing battle with the patriotically disposed student body. Boiling arguments erupted in Parliament over the socialist government's policies threatening to destroy the foundations of the Republic. Public protests rocked the nation and resulted in the military overthrow of the socialist regime on the night of December 17, 1926.

The Archbishop's letters show that he was very anxious to return to Rome and take personal charge of the many problems in setting up the Generalate. He was held up by repeated promises made by the Government to negotiate the Concordat. In his letter to Father Reklaitis, December 10, 1926:

> I am pushing things very hard here with the expectation of leaving soon, but the Government keeps asking that I remain and says it is willing to start procedures for the Concordat. I shall be able to take up this matter with them only next week.

On December 13, 1926 to Father Reklaitis:

> I sit here as though on a heap of burning coals. I long for the day when I can return to you. The Minister of the Interior, Walter Pozela, asked me to wait. He wants to discuss the Concordat, but as yet there have been no serious conversations. It seems the Government has no serious intentions. It is hard to see if any good will come of all this. As soon as I can, I shall return to Rome.
>
> Possibly this week I shall be able to confer with Mr. Pozela and learn if there are any realistic hopes for the Concordat. Do not lose heart; everything will be all right. I hope to see you soon. Affectionately and with blessings to all. +George.

The overthrow of the government was described in his letter of December 21, 1926:

> There has been a great change in Lithuania. The army cut short and subdued the bolshevik uprisings. The make-up of the Executive branch of the government has been changed. Anthony Smetona was

elected President. I paid a call on him today. It was a pleasant meeting. There was no bloodshed and calm prevails. The populace is satisfied with the Nationalists; the country will be able to breathe easily again. We expect to be able to reach an agreement with this government, and I shall be able to resolve matters more speedily. My sincere Christmas greetings to all, and I bless you. + George

From these letters we see that the Archbishop was possessed with a sense of urgency, an intense resoluteness to take matters in hand, find the best solutions, act immediately and "be consumed as that candle on the altar" in his labors. Another illustration of this urgency is found in his letter of December 31st to Father Reklaitis:

May God grant that this government enter into proper relations with the Apostolic See. At this time I am hard at work writing a draft of the Concordat and we hope everything will be ready in about three weeks. It is peaceful here now and getting better. The responsible citizenry is satisfied with the turn of events.

My greetings and best wishes to all my confreres. There is little time for letter-writing. I bless all of you. +George.

The new Lithuanian Government tried to maintain order and peace. It was necessary to restore some war-time restrictions and impose a censorship on the press. The Cabinet was organized on non-partisan lines with a clear majority of Nationalists. The Prime Minister, Augustine Voldemaras, was also Foreign Affairs Minister.

Soon after Christmas the Archbishop made official calls on all the new Cabinet Ministers. The most important topic of conversation was the Concordat which Voldemaras supported personally and actively in his desire that Lithuania's prestige be heightened abroad and to gain the support of Catholics for the Nationalists.

Archbishop Matulaitis, in preparing the Concordat, was aided by his expertise in Canon Law which enabled him to harmonize its requirements with the Constitution of the Republic. The Concordat consisted of 12 typewritten pages. Its 22 articles with a labyrinth of many paragraphs covered every phase of the requirements of both sides. It

Cross marks room in Hagentorn clinic where Archbishop George died.

was a reflection of the Archbishop's love of peace and harmony, with future disagreements to be settled tranquilly, without threats or recrimination.

Ignoring the physical pain which was his life-long companion, he finished the project in three weeks' time on January 20, 1927. On the following day he wrote a report to the Holy See on the conditions of the Church in Lithuania, and ended with this sentence: "I think my mission to Lithuania can be considered finished."

On that day he felt very weak. He was pale and could not eat. His brother Marians convinced him to retire earlier than usual. About midnight he felt severe abdominal pains. It was necessary to summon a doctor immediately, but no one was allowed on the streets after midnight because of military restrictions. Every minute counted, and the telephone was the only means to get permission for a

doctor to come. The patient's condition was found to be critical and he had to be hospitalized at once. Since it was dangerous to use any kind of vehicle, he was carefully carried to Dr. Alexander Hagentorn's clinic. It was a case of ruptured appendix.

The surgery went well and the patient seemed to improve daily. Holy Communion was brought to him each day, but on January 26 the Archbishop asked to receive it as Viaticum.

At ten o'clock that night, Marian Father Ignatius Cesaitis and Father Joseph Vailokaitis went to the hospital to visit him. Inquiring of the head nurse about His Excellency's condition they were told that it was worse. His pulse was 120. She said that in the morning he had complained that he had so much work to do, but this evening he had said, "This is enough, I am going into eternity." Father Cesaitis became alarmed and telephoned the monastery for permission from Father Bucys to stay the night with the Archbishop.

A most graphic and moving account is left for history of the final agony of this great man of the Church and the Lithuanian nation by Father Cesaitis in his notes entitled "The Final Hours." We quote his notes:

> On entering the clinic, I met the doctor and the nurse:
>
> "How is the Archbishop? Is he better?"
>
> "Unfortunately, no. His pulse is alarming. How sad! Until this morning we firmly believed that he would get well. Everything was entirely normal, but from ten this morning he got worse and worse."
>
> "I shall remain with the Archbishop," I said sadly.
>
> "There is no real need," the doctor and the nurse comforted me. "If there is any change for the worse, we will call you by phone. However, do as you will."
>
> I went to the patient. He was breathing heavily and moaning at times. The nurse was in constant attendance. I sat down at his bedside, and after a time His Excellency opened his eyes. I knelt down and kissed his hand. He stroked my head.
>
> "Excellency, I came to visit you."
>
> "Thank you, and everybody. They are taking very good care of me. Why don't you go home!"

I arose but I could not go home. Not wanting to be a burden to others, His Excellency would thank his visitors and the nurses for their kindness and tell them to get some rest.

I went out to the corridor and finished Vespers. About eleven o'clock I sought out the doctor and the nurse, but the reports were the same. The patient was not improving; he is getting medication intravenously. I returned to his room unnoticed, and I was uneasy, for he, my superior, had told me to go home. The barely audible moans and the rapid breathing did not bode well. The doctor warned me that there is no hope, that it is unlikely he would last the night.

At one in the morning, I approached the exhausted and weakening patient. I knelt down at his bed and said, "Excellency, please bless the Congregation." He put his hand on my head and caressed my face as a mother would a child, and making the sign of the cross on my forehead he kept repeating: "Close ranks and sacrifice yourselves. Close ranks and sacrifice yourselves!"

He raised his hand in blessing. He lowered it again on my head and touched my face gently several times as though confirming the blessing he was imparting to the Congregation. My eyes filled with tears and my lips kissed my beloved Father's hand. I stayed close to him for a long time and his hand still rested on my head.

What a leader! Even in his dying moments he gives heroic orders. To close ranks, as I understand it, is to gather forces and present a united front in the battle for Christ and the Gospel. Close ranks that you may be strong; sacrifice yourselves to win the battle.

After a while I stood up and asked him if I could administer Extreme Unction. "Good," he said, "this morning I received Viaticum, so now give me the anointings." After anointing him I kissed His Excellency's hand. He told me to go home now and get some rest. What am I to do? I do not want to go home. I can't. I remain silent. He repeats his words. I kissed his hand, stood up, and drew back out of his sight.

Soon I heard him praying the words of a psalm. I couldn't catch which one it was. Then as a bishop does, he placed his hands together, extended them and in a half-circle made the sign of the cross. That was his last farewell to his acquaintances, friends, to all his loved ones, to his beloved country, and to the world.

The doctor and the nurses took desperate measures to keep the patient alive, but it was all in vain. In seems that God's will was otherwise. The patient was restless at times and kept pushing his covers. Looking at the head nurse the Archbishop asked her name. She said it was Josepha. The he told her to kneel, placed his hand

Archbishop George on his deathbed

on her head, and told her to repeat after him. "I, Josepha, the Lord's servant, profess in the hands of the Almighty the three simple vows for an indeterminate time." Josepha prayerfully repeated each word.

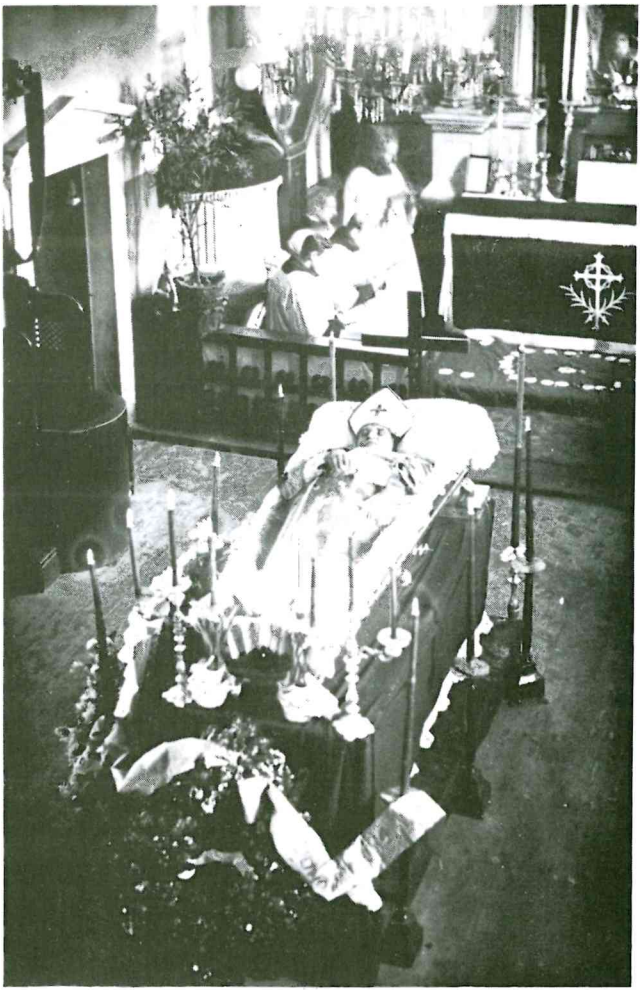
In view of the fact that Josepha was a laywoman and the words the Archbishop spoke were from the formulary for a nun pronouncing her vows, it appears that even in his dying moments he wanted to lead souls along the path to perfection by way of the Evangelical Counsels. Surprisingly, the Archbishop spoke these words loudly and distinctly, and I was overjoyed for a moment, thinking he might be getting better. However, at two and three o'clock his pulse was barely discernible. At half past three the patient was very peaceful; his breathing very slow... The three nurses, the doctor, and I knelt down to recite the prayers for the dying. Our prayers and tears accompanied the Archbishop's soul to the bosom of the Almighty at 3:45 a.m. on January 27, 1927.

* * *

When the Archbishop's death was announced, people began to gather that afternoon at Dr. Hagentorn's clinic. Preparations were made to transfer the Archbishop's body to St. Gertrude's, the Marian church in Kaunas.

Marian Fathers' St. Gertrude church in Kaunas

As the procession started, led by the mitred Msgr. Faidutti, the bells of all the churches in Kaunas tolled. The crowds on the sidewalks grew steadily larger. Seminarians chanted the sorrowful psalms. Although a funeral hearse was at hand, the heavy oaken casket was carried all the way on the shoulders of the Futurist students.



Archbishop George waked in St. Gertrude church

In the church the casket was placed on a tilted catafalque and the lid was removed for viewing as the throngs passed by. It was hard for them to accept that the face they now saw composed in death was that of the spiritual giant many had been privileged to see so recently smiling and radiating in his glance the living values of eternity.

Hierarchy in funeral procession

At five o'clock in the evening of January 28, the church bells started to toll again signalling the funeral procession from St. Gertrude's to the Basilica. The casket once more was borne on the shoulders of the Futurists. The streets were lined with spectators. Groups of students from the various schools together with organizations carrying banners and wreaths formed a huge funeral cortege.

In the procession were many priests, representatives of the Government, Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, University professors, and the entire Cathedral Chapter followed by the bishops of Lithuania led by the mitred Archbishop Karevicius, now a Marian monk.

The streets around the Basilica were filled with throngs of people. The spacious Cathedral was overcrowded, with hardly enough room in the nave for the relatives and dignitaries. The casket was placed on a high catafalque. In a word, the huge basilica was the scene of a stately though mournful ceremony which ended with the chanting of the Vespers for the Dead.

January 29 was bright and sunny. From early morning

lines of people came to pay their respects to the Archbishop before going to work. From six o'clock on Requiem Masses were celebrated at all the altars of the Basilica. About 10:30 a.m., the relatives and dignitaries of the Government, the Parliament, the Diplomatic Corps, and other public figures started to gather in the cathedral. Present were all the bishops of Lithuania, the prelates, and the representative of the Vatican, Msgr. Faidutti.

The celebrant of the Pontifical Mass was the Metropolitan Archbishop Skvireckas. The sermon was preached by Bishop Reinys, and the State Opera Chorus sang. Three bishops chanted the "Libera." After the Mass the Church's hierarchy formed a procession for the entombment.

As soon as the sorrowful "In Paradisum" sounded, the procession started slowly toward the back of the cathedral where a crypt had been prepared for the Archbishop's eternal rest. When the last of the religious services ended, the eulogies began. The first to speak was President Smetona who described at length the many areas of the Archbishop's activities and extolled his merits for the Church and Lithuania. Representatives of various

Government officials in funeral procession

Archbishop entombed in crypt of Kaunas Basilica

organizations and public leaders added their encomiums. To the singing of the Angelus, the casket was lowered to take its place beside earlier Bishops of the Samogitian Diocese: Bishops Matthias Valancius, Mecislaus Paliulionis, and Gaspar Cirtautas. Much could be quoted from the President's eulogy, but this one thought will suffice:

> Archbishop George was a great man: hence he was a great innovator in fields so wide that no one can take them in at one glance. To appreciate George Matulaitis as a religious, bishop, archbishop, and furthermore as the personification of the human ideal, we must see him with the eyes of the spirit in order to see how he viewed this visible world and measured it in terms of the divine... As Archbishop George taught, so he lived. His spoken word did not part with his actions, and in this he made an immense contribution to society. Here his work as a Man of the Church and also as a citizen of the State were combined in creativity and organization: for the Church, 'sub specie

> aeternitatis;' and for the Republic, 'sub specie temporis.' But which of these is of greater value? That which lays the deeper foundations, eternal foundations ordained by religion. These foundations reach the very depths of the human soul... There are not nor can there be any contradictions between the two. Only a government, which does not understand the indispensable essence of religion for the person and for social order, can think otherwise.

The Marians planned to observe the 25th anniversary of the renewal of their order in 1934. Given the occasion, it was proposed to transfer the Archbishop's remains from Kaunas to Mariampole where he had been born, attended school, and where he had revived the Marian Order.

When the formalities for the transfer had been completed in Kaunas, the casket was opened in the crypt of the Basilica in the presence of the clergy, the representatives of the Government, and physicians. The Nemunas River had overflowed its banks in 1931 and had flooded the lower section of the city and the Cathedral substructure. The Archbishop's vestments were found to be water-stained, but his body was not in the least decomposed.

A new casket was provided and the remains were taken by train to Mariampole on October 24, 1934. A great number of people awaited the arrival of this great churchman and national figure. It was at dusk on a cloudy day when the train arrived. A solemn procession of parishioners with lighted candles and torches escorted the casket to the beautifully decorated church. After the sermon and services, the Archbishop's casket was entombed in a specially prepared reddish granite sarcophagus in a chapel on the right side of the church.

The parishioners remembered him from seminarian years and as a young priest. Now they frequently visited his sarcophagus and prayed fervently asking his intercession for recovery of health and other graces, firmly convinced in their hearts that he was a saint. When Bishop Karosas noticed this popular and spontaneous devotion, he approved a prayer to the Holy Trinity to obtain Archbishop George's elevation to the ranks of the Blessed. These

prayers and leaflets were distributed throughout Lithuania.

As they celebrated their Silver Jubilee, the Marians could thank God fervently for the successful growth of their Order. In 1934 they had over 20 monasteries in

Church at Mariampole at transferring of remains in 1934

Last resting place and tombstone in Mariampole church

various parts of the world and numbered 430 members. For the occasion, their leadership asked for an audience with Pope Pius XI, which was set for July 16, 1934. A reception hall near the Pope's office, the Sala del Tronetto, was assigned for the audience. Ordinarily this is the hall where ranking diplomats of various countries presented their credentials to the Head of the Vatican State, the Pope.

At the appointed hour all the Marians then in Rome, from the Superior General (Father Andrew Cikoto) down to the brother cook, had gathered. The Vatican officials arranged them in a semi-circle from the Superior General to the brother who was given the task of holding a portrait

Pope Pius XI

of Archbishop Matulaitis, intended as a gift to the Pope. When Pius XI entered the room, all knelt down. The Pope came to the Superior General and proceeded down the line, presenting the papal ring to be kissed. As he approached the portrait of his good friend, Archbishop George, he paused and said, "Gratum donum quia gratissima persona." (This is a very dear gift because he was a very dear person). After a brief silent moment, he added, "Hic vir fuit vere sanctus." (This man was truly a saint). These words struck deeply into the hearts of all those in attendance, as though it were an unofficial canonization of their reviver.

* * *

January 27, 1977 was an auspicious day for the whole Marian Congregation. It was the 50th Anniversary of the death of the Servant of God, Archbishop George Matulaitis, a day commemorated not only by the Marians but widely throughout the Catholic world.

Solemn religious ceremonies were held at the Generalate in Rome. The Prefect of the Congregation for Religious, Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, presided. He celebrated Mass with 24 concelebrating Marian priests and representatives of other religious orders. The Cardinal preached a sermon in which he highlighted the main characteristics of George Matulaitis, Servant of God, namely his love for the Church, the Way of the Cross he had lived, and his love for the Immaculately Conceived Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church. After the Mass, the Superior General read a telegram from the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Villot:

> Since the Marian Fathers Congregation is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the death of its Founder, the Servant of God, George Matulaitis-Matulevicius, the Holy Father joins in their commemoration and urges the Marians, in laboring for Christ and the Church, to maintain and foster the heritage left them by their Reformer. On this occasion, he imparts the Apostolic Blessing on the Superior General and all the Congregation's members as a sign of heavenly favor.

On the preceding day, the general staff of the Marian Congregation had been present at the weekly general audience at which Pope Paul VI made reference to the Marians:

> First of all We want to acknowledge the presence of the representatives of the Congregation of the Marians under the title of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We know that tomorrow is the 50th Anniversary of the death of Archbishop George Matulaitis-Matulevicius, who left a great spiritual legacy and an example of holiness. He is a Founder of this order, in that he was its reformer and Superior General. Let us not forget this eminent personage. We trust that we shall be able to honor him, not just in heaven, but also give him due veneration even here on earth; of course, with the help of your prayers and support. We, too, are proud of this Archbishop and, therefore, We greet the representatives of this congregation, your entire family of religious, and especially those who are in particular need of Divine help in some countries. May all of you experience Our special blessing.

The American Marian province of St. Casimir in Chicago, the largest in the United States, rivalled the commemoration held in Rome. The Provincial, Father Joseph Dambrauskas, sought to make the occasion truly memorable. The 50th Anniversary of Archbishop George's death was observed in a two-day memorial January 22-23, 1977.

On January 22, in the auditorium of Maria High School, conducted by the Sisters of St. Casimir, a Memorial Concert was given by the prestigious Ciurlionis Choral Ensemble from Cleveland.

On Sunday a solemn religious ceremony took place in the Immaculate Conception Lithuanian parish (Brighton Park), with His Eminence Cardinal John P. Cody, presiding and preaching. Msgr. Damasus Mozeris arranged the liturgy.

Bishop Vincent Brizgys together with a large group of concelebrants celebrated the Mass. The sung part of the liturgy was The Mass for Suffering Lithuania, composed by

Mr. Mikulskis for the 1976 International Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia.

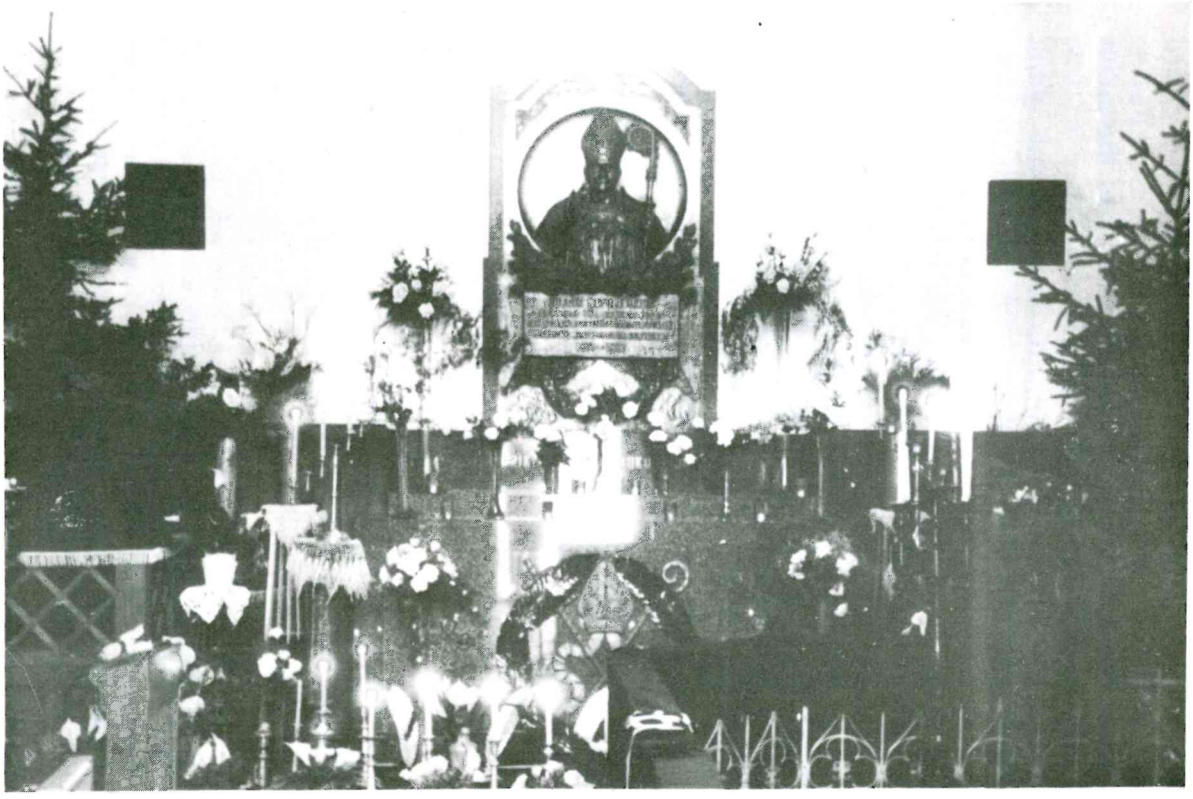
The English sermon was preached by Cardinal Cody. In it the heroic aspects of the life, labors, and suffering of Archbishop Matulaitis were emphasized. The Cardinal recalled that several years earlier he had designated a Board of Inquiry, with his Auxiliary Bishop Alfred Abramowicz as chairman, to hear in Chicago the testimony of witnesses in the Archbishop's beatification process, and that he himself had sent the documents of this inquiry to Pope Paul VI.

Sincerity and deep interest were evident in the Cardinal's words. Not only did he cite the signs of holiness in the Archbishop's life, but he also urged Lithuanians, whom he called a nation of defenders of the faith, to assist the cause by their prayers and petitions. May these expedite the process so the whole Christian world could soon venerate Archbishop George as the Saint for these modern times.

The memorials of the Anniversary would be far from complete if the ceremonies in Lithuania were not mentioned. The hearts and minds of all the Catholics in Lithuania were turned in January of 1977 toward Mariampole to the Archbishop's tomb, pleading for surcease from the ills no human medicine can cure. In preparation for the commemoration of the anniversary, sermons about the Servant of God, George Matulaitis, were preached in many churches of the land.

Mariampole was the scene of the most impressive ceremonies. The sarcophagus was draped with the Papal flag and red velvet, and surrounded by banks of flowers and votive candles. From 8 a.m. on January 27, Mass was celebrated continuously at all the altars of the church until eleven o'clock when Bishop Louis Povilonis celebrated the liturgy in the Sacred Heart chapel. Father Wenceslaus Aliulis preached.

At twelve noon Bishop Vincent Sladkevicius celebrated a Pontifical Mass at the main altar of the church. Father Victor Sauklys preached the sermon. The church was full



People continue to visit tomb, light candles, decorate with flowers

from early morning and many went to confession and received Holy Communion. Some of the priests heard confessions for five hours. After the Mass, Bishop Sladkevicius, vested in episcopal garb, ascended the pulpit and gave a sermon befitting the occasion.

After the sermon and during the singing of the hymn, "Mary, Mary," about 70 priests and the two bishops went in procession to the tomb of the Servant of God, George. A prayer was recited there petitioning his beatification.

At seven o'clock in the evening another Mass and sermon gave opportunity for people who could not attend earlier to participate in the commemoration. People from all parts of the country made up the throngs at all of the services. The ceremonies ended with this declaration of intent and purpose:

> As we commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the death of this great Man of the Church, we the Bishops of Lithuania and Ordinaries of its dioceses, ask our brother priests and the faithful to cherish the example of the Archbishop and thank God for granting us this Beacon. Let us ardently pray the Lord, that in our times also He send such dedicated Shepherds to our Church. Today and throughout the year let us pray that the illustrious Servant of God, George Matulaitis, quickly be elevated by the Church to the ranks of the Blessed and the Saints.

Here it is fitting to cite the entry of February 6, 1911 in the spiritual diary of Father George Matulaitis, then beginning the work of reconstructing the Marian Congregation:

> Let us strive to know our generation; to understand and appreciate the people of our time, their will, their desires, aspirations and aims. May each worthy idea gain our approval; each worthy project our support; each worthy effort and deed our encouragement and praise; each misfortune and hardship our sympathy and assistance. May each error, as it buffets us like an ocean wave striking a sea-wall, dissipate itself and disappear; and each evil deed or evil effort be dashed to pieces.

He lived these words perfectly throughout his life. It is consummated.

* * *

When Archbishop George died unexpectedly in 1927, reports of his saintliness were contained in every spoken or written word describing his life and accomplishments. Without exception, in the eulogies given during the burial services, the speakers alluded to his exalted spiritual stature. At the interment in the Basilica, President Smetona stated:

> He looked at this visible world and measured it by divine standards.

The Leader of Parliament, Alexander Stulginskis, said:

> Today we mourn a person who far surpassed others not only in the greatness of his spirit, his profound intellect, but also by his holy life. He taught us the truths of the Gospel not just by the eloquence of his words, but also by the shining example of his life.

Even after the Archbishop's burial, the constantly burning candles, the fresh flowers, and the prayerful groups of people kneeling at the doors of the crypt in the cathedral showed that he was not forgotten. This was a demonstration by ordinary people that an extraordinary man was buried there. They did not pray for him, but prayed for his intercession with God.

The testimony of many persons who had known the Archbishop in different situations in life is contained in the biography "Archbishop George Matulevicius" published by the Marians in 1933. Father Joseph Tumas wrote:

> He died 'in odore sanctitatis' (in the odor of sanctity). It is not possible that the hearts of people instinctively feel now that Archbishop George is the heavenly patron of the poor and downtrodden? I find it very easy to believe this.

Archbishop Andrew Szeptycki (1865-1944), the Metropolitan of the Uniate Church in Galicia worte:

> After his death, which deprived me of a very dear friend, I pray for his help and intercession rather than commending his soul to the mercy of God.

Shortly, suggestions and requests were heard that the cause for his beatification be started. Father Bruno Paukstys, a Salesian, wrote:

> Other nations pray that their people be elevated to the glory of the altar, and God hears their prayers. We, too, should pray that our Matulaitis be granted that same honor.

As Professor Francis Dovydaitis ended his extensive memoirs of the Archbishop he urged that definite action be taken that the first Bishop of Vilnius in the years of Lithuania's independence, the prime mover in establishing Lithuania's Church Province, a man of holy life, take his place in the ranks of the beatified and be canonized; so that Lithuania may have its own patron with the Almighty, with whom his soul now dwells in eternal light and happiness.

The sarcophagus in Mariampole was more easily accessible to the people than had been his burial place in Kaunas. The streams of suppliants were not just residents of Mariampole but also people who came from the farther stretches of Lithuania. Many of them left written testimonials on the tomb recounting the graces received through his intercession. The press received and published many letters expressing gratitude for favors received, especially for the return of good health.

The constantly growing public acclamation of Archbishop George's holiness was a clear sign that it was time to institute the cause for beatification. In responding to this, the General Chapter of the Marian Congregation decided in 1939 to take the necessary steps. However, these plans were suspended by World War II and the occupations of Lithuania. It was necessary to wait for a degree of normalcy to return. According to Canon Law the process had to be started in Lithuania, but this was impossible because of the Russian occupation. The Holy See, therefore, gave permission on April 21, 1953 for the process to be started in Rome.

A postulator had to be appointed to promote the cause

of the candidate, to collect all his writings and gather the witnesses to testify on the person's holiness of life and works. All this had to be presented with documentation to an ecclesiastical court. The superiors of the Marians appointed Father Casimir Reklaitis (1887-1967).

According to Canon Law the beatification cause has two stages. The initial inquiries in an informative process are made by the local diocesan Ordinary who reports to Rome. The apostolic process at the Vatican passes into the hands of the Congregation of Sacred Rites. So thorough is the investigation that it usually lasts many years. The Pope is the final judge. The solemn beatification takes place in St. Peter's, when the brief is read, a picture of the 'beatus' unveiled and venerated, and the new collect of the Mass in his honor is sung. If after this process two miracles at the intercession of the Beatus are confirmed, he is proclaimed a saint.

The informational process for Archbishop George was begun in 1953 and was finished in 1966. During this interval 16 witnesses were examined in the Roman tribunal, and six in the tribunals of other dioceses.

Meanwhile the postulator gathered all of the Archbishop's published and unpublished manuscripts. The sum of these in the various languages made up 28 volumes. These were turned over in 1957 to six theologian examiners for appraisal. They finished their work and gave their opinion to the Congregation of Sacred Rites in 1959. The Congregation, basing its decision on the findings of the examiners, gave its approval for the furtherance of the process.

All of the materials in the beatification process were printed and given in 1960 to the Defender of the Faith whose duty it was to examine them and put up objections. The Defender was delayed in his work for a long time because of Vatican Council II and the work it entailed for the higher officials of the Vatican. The Defender was able to present his arguments only in March of 1964. The specially appointed jurist advocate to the postulator

Cardinal Ugo Poletti in the Vicariate of Rome signs acts of the apostolic process for the beatification of Archbishop George Matulaitis

answered all the arguments in detail and gave his report on December 8, 1964.

Apart from the interrogation of witnesses and the collection of manuscripts, it was required that outstanding people petition for the approval of beatification. In the period between 1956 and 1958, three Cardinals, 27 archbishops and bishops, 20 Superiors General of religious orders, four superiors of women's religious communities, and three groups of Lithuanian Catholics presented their petitions. The Defender of the Faith was surprised that the bishops of Poland were not among the petitioners. Toward the close of the Vatican Council, the postulator obtained the favoring signatures of three Cardinals (Wyszynski, Beran, and Slipyj), 23 Polish bishops, and 24 bishops of other nationalities.

A volume of 575 pages, the "Positio Super Causae Introductione," was given to the Cardinals of the Congregation of Sacred Rites. In their meeting of November 15, 1966, they attested that all was in order and decided

Cardinal Stephen Wyszynski signs acts of the apostolic process in Warsaw

that the case can be referred to the Tribunal of the Holy See, if the Pope so permits.

The Prefect of the Congregation, Cardinal Laraona, informed the Pope and asked his consent. Pope Paul VI gave his "placet" on February 9, 1967. This finished the process at the diocesan levels.

As this informational process was being completed, the general postulator, Father Reklaitis, felt exhausted and in poor health, and asked to be relieved of his duties. The Generalate of the Marians agreed and appointed Father Joseph Vaisnora, who immediately began the work of introducing the case in the Apostolic Tribunal.

This part of the process went on in three different locations: Rome, Chicago, and Warsaw, where from 1970 to 1972, 37 witnesses were interrogated. The testimony was sent to the newly titled Congregation for the Cause of Saints. Firstly, all had to be translated from the English, Polish, and Lithuanian into Latin and Italian.

The tribunal of the apostolic process in Chicago. From the left sitting: Provincial Rev. J. Dambrauskas, Msgr. Smaza, Bishop A. Abramowicz, Msgr. Mozeris, Rev. Mikolaitis; standing: Rev. Skrodenis, Rev. Kuzinskas, Rev. Rolek, Rev. F. Kelpsas and Rev. Nockunas.

When all this had been done according to the current requirements, all the assembled documents of both processes had once more to be given to the Defender of the Faith who was to examine them for inaccuracies or deficiencies from the juridical standpoint. A few were found, but the Cardinals of the Congregation for the Cause of Saints decided on March 7, 1975 that all the official documents and evidentiary procedures were juridically correct, and the case was declared legitimate.

For further progress it was necessary that a lawyer draw up a Summarium, a summation of the evidence given by witnesses of the candidate's heroic virtues. This lawyer also had to write an Informatio, a synopsis of the life and activities of the Servant of God. The lawyer's work, a volume of 676 large pages, was printed on May 6, 1977.

Several copies of this were given to the Defender of the Faith who then had to make comments or criticisms and, if necessary, demand supplemental documents or proofs. To all this the lawyer had to answer and explain whatever might not be clear. This, too, was to be printed, and if no additional

difficulties were encountered, the apostolic process would be finished and the Holy See would make its decision as to whether the Servant of God, George Matulaitis, indeed possessed virtues of heroic degree.

The deliberation and evaluation of the heroic virtues is the task of three commissions: Introductory, Preparatory, and General (chaired by the Pope himself). The latter gives the final decision on whether the virtues of the Servant of God were exceptional and heroic. At that time the Servant of God gets another title: Venerabilis Servus Dei, Venerable. If there are miracles and they are found authentic by the Holy See, the next step is to declare the Servant of God, Blessed.

This description of the nature and process involved in Archbishop George's cause demonstrates how careful and conscientious the Church is in examining the candidate's life, virtues, and holiness. The whole of the candidate's life has to be marked with a great love of God and neighbor, and a total dedication to the honor of God, good of the Church, and salvation of souls. These qualities were pre-eminent in the Servant of God, George Matulaitis.

When the process of beatification began, the persuasion of the faithful about his holiness and their confidence in his intercession with God grew apace. Up to 1978 the postulator had received about 900 messages, expressions of gratitude for both spiritual and temporal graces received, most often about recovery of health.

The bi-monthly Marian journal "Laivas" publishes these communications together with current news about the process, reminiscences about Archbishop George, and the names of those who support his cause.

From this account of the process for beatification, it is evident that Archbishop Matulaitis' case is finished and that a speedy decision can be expected. As for miracles, it would seem that even the detailed and scrupulous findings of the representatives of the Church in affirming the signs of holiness of the Servant of God are not the final

determinant, lacking the additional element of a miracle obtained through his intercession.

There is such evidence. The postulator has already received about 900 testimonials of unusual spiritual and physical favors received. This in itself is evidence which cannot be doubted. It would be unthinkable for people to perjure themselves before God in a matter so serious. If only one percent of these testimonials would be found acceptable, it would be more than the Holy See requires.

In the matter of verifying the authenticity of miracles, mention must be made about conditions today in Lithuania which is the source of most of these testimonials. The anti-religious Soviet regime ruthlessly persecutes the Catholic Faith. Under such circumstances it is impossible for a doctor even to try to document the fact of a miraculous cure. Moreover, no higher Churchman would be given permission to investigate and verify such an occurrence.

It just remains for us to petition the Holy See to take these sorry conditions under consideration and proffer, not only to Lithuania but to the entire world, a modern saint, Archbishop George Matulaitis, a true apostle, a long-suffering martyr, a defender of the under-privileged.